

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 2261

To designate Greece as a program country for purposes of the visa waiver program established under section 217 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 5, 2009

Mrs. MALONEY (for herself, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. MCMAHON, Mr. SARBANES, Mr. CAPUANO, Ms. BERKLEY, Mr. PASCARELL, Mr. MCGOVERN, Mr. SPACE, and Ms. TITUS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## A BILL

To designate Greece as a program country for purposes of the visa waiver program established under section 217 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

4       The Congress makes the following findings:

5               (1) The Founding Fathers of the United States  
6       drew heavily on the political experience and philoso-  
7       phy of ancient Greece in forming our representative  
8       democracy.

1           (2) Greece played a major role in the World  
2           War II struggle to protect freedom and democracy  
3           through such bravery as was shown in the historic  
4           Battle of Crete, which provided the Axis land war  
5           with its first major setback, setting off a chain of  
6           events that significantly affected the outcome of  
7           World War II.

8           (3) Throughout the 20th century Greece was  
9           one of three countries in the world, besides the  
10          former British Empire, that allied with the United  
11          States in every major international conflict.

12          (4) Greece has been a reliable partner in the  
13          North Atlantic Treaty Organization since joining in  
14          1952.

15          (5) In 1981, Greece became one of the 15 origi-  
16          nal European Union member countries and, in Jan-  
17          uary 2001, successfully acceded to the Eurozone.

18          (6) Among all candidate countries for entry in  
19          the visa waiver program, Greece constitutes a sepa-  
20          rate and unique case in that it is the only country,  
21          among the candidates, that meets all technical re-  
22          quirements for inclusion in the program.

23          (7) Greece requires only a valid passport for  
24          visiting United States citizens and not a visa.

1           (8) According to a September 2008 Government  
2           Accountability Office report, Greece has a 1.6 per-  
3           cent visa refusal rate, which is well below the max-  
4           imum allowable 3 percent rate for refusals of U.S.  
5           non-immigrant visitor visa applications.

6           (9) As of January 1, 2007, Greek passports  
7           issued prior to January 1, 2006, are no longer valid  
8           for travel. Therefore, Greek nationals are traveling  
9           with new, machine-readable passports that are pro-  
10          duced using state-of-the-art technology (biometrics)  
11          to meet the highest possible security standards and  
12          specifications.

13          (10) Greece is one of fifteen European nations  
14          accepted as a Schengen country which allows for  
15          travel through Europe as if you are traveling  
16          throughout the United States. Greece is the only  
17          Schengen country excluded from participating in the  
18          visa waiver program.

19          (11) Countries included in the visa waiver pro-  
20          gram with similar demographics and economic rela-  
21          tions with the United States as Greece have 50 per-  
22          cent more visitors to the United States due to their  
23          visa waiver status.

24          (12) More than 50,000 Greek citizens visit the  
25          United States each year.

1           (13) There are 3 million American citizens of  
2 Greek ancestry residing in the United States.

3           (14) The Secretary of Homeland Security and  
4 the Secretary of State administer the visa waiver  
5 program, which allows citizens from 35 countries, in-  
6 cluding all of the original 15 European Union mem-  
7 bers except Greece, to visit the United States as  
8 tourists without visas.

9           (15) In September 2007, Greece was the only  
10 country formally nominated as a candidate country  
11 for the Visa Waiver Program by the U.S. Depart-  
12 ment of State yet was not included when the visa  
13 waiver program expanded to include 8 new countries  
14 in 2008.

15 **SEC. 2. DESIGNATING GREECE A VISA WAIVER PROGRAM**  
16 **COUNTRY.**

17       Effective on the date of the enactment of this Act,  
18 and notwithstanding section 217(c) of the Immigration  
19 and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1187(c)), Greece shall be  
20 deemed a designated program country for purposes of the  
21 visa waiver program established under section 217 of such  
22 Act.

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