

Delphi Economic Forum: “In 1996, State Representative **Leonidas Raptakis** became the first Greek-American State Senator to be elected in Rhode Island. He defeated a six-term incumbent by a 2-1 margin. Before that victory, he had served in the Rhode Island House of Representatives for two terms winning passage into law several key pieces of legislation.

Senator Raptakis has won re-election four times, including a 2002 victory in a newly enlarged district. He ran unopposed in the November 2004, 2006, and 2008 elections. Raptakis served in the Rhode Island State Senate until 2010, when he left to run his first state-wide race for Secretary of State. While he lost a primary election that year, he continued to play an active role in state politics, leading a successful effort to oppose an unpopular meals tax which would have done further damage to restaurants in the state which were already struggling in a tough economy.

In November of 2012, Raptakis earned an impressive victory in both the Democratic Primary and general election, winning nearly 62% of the vote to recapturing the State Senate seat and has won re-election in 2014 and recently in 2016.

Throughout his public service career, Raptakis has been a staunch supporter of Greece and Cyprus. In

December 1998, Senator Raptakis and other regional elected officials formed the “Hellenic-American Coalition of New England” to inform their congressional delegation on issues pertaining to issues in Cyprus and Greece. A year later, Senator Raptakis led a delegation of elected officials to Cyprus and Greece on a fact-finding mission. He has since joined other delegations visiting Cyprus.

A long-time member of the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association, Raptakis has worked on a range of policy issues impacting not only Greece but many European nations. He successfully fought to enact legislation prohibiting Rhode Island’s state universities from accepting foreign money with restrictions attached that would compromise their academic integrity. During his time in the Rhode Island legislature, Raptakis won passage of resolutions regarding the Pontian Genocide, recognizing the Hellenic roots of Macedonia, a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem and safeguarding the Ecumenical Patriarchate by urging Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Patriarchate and re-open the Theological School of Halki. (The resolution also called on the European Union to deny Turkish membership in the EU until Turkey changed its policies.) Most recently, Raptakis worked with his state's Congressional delegation and Secretary of State

Clinton to ensure Greece's inclusion in the federal Visa Waiver Program.

Raptakis was a leader in the successful Liberty Project, an ambitious effort which secured Congressional passage of a Special Act authorizing the donation of the Arthur M. Huddell, the last remaining Liberty Ship in private hands, to Greece for use as a floating museum in Piraeus. It will be dedicated to the history of the Greek merchant marine and its impact on the nation, as well as the historic ties of friendship between Greece and the United States. Raptakis continues to assist Greece in the economic area, by writing to President Barack Obama in supporting a fair resolution to the Greek economic crisis to asking Delta airlines to increase winter service to Athens, a leading supporter of the Trans Adriatic Project, increasing the quota limit for job opportunities in the United States Greece and promoting products of Greece being introduced in the United States. Senator Raptakis has also participated as guest speaker at the Greek Azerbaijani Chamber of Greece on business and political relationships between the USA, Greece and Azerbaijan and also in the petroleum business conference in Thessaloniki.

Raptakis continues a dialogue with the Rhode Island's Federal congressional delegation on issues of concern such as blocking the sale to Turkey of the F-35 aircraft

and arms sales, constant Turkish threats in the Aegean, the importance of the Trans Adriatic Project and the economic crisis in Greece. In February 2017, along with US Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and the Propeller Club of Greece, Raptakis facilitated the honoring of the 70th anniversary of the Truman Doctrine on board the Hellas Liberty.

Through it all, Senator Raptakis has earned a reputation as a no-nonsense legislator and a strong leader with a reputation for integrity. Among his other legislative accomplishments:

- Authored a major crime bill, which increased the prison time convicted murders, must serve before eligible for parole.
- Crafted the state's first anti car- jacking law with mandatory prison sentences.
- Pushed to close loopholes in the state's drunk-driving laws and target repeat drunk-driving offenders.
- Fought for government reforms on business regulations.
- Introduced the Rhode Island version of the

“Patients’ Bill of Rights”.

- Both his parents are from the island of Andros. His mother, the former and late Evangelia Valmas is from the village of Apikia and his late father, Paraskevas Raptakis was from the village of Strapouryes. Senator Raptakis has spent many childhood summers on Andros and his family still retains a home in Apikia.

He is member of the Annunciation Greek-Orthodox Church in Cranston, Rhode Island, along with his wife Donna-Marie and his two children, Alexandra and Nicholas. He is a member of Ahepa chapter 106, District 7.

In Rhode Island political circles, Senator Raptakis is recognized as an independent voice, someone who has been outspoken in promoting honest and effective government. He is one of the most popular politicians in the state, a small business owner recognized for bringing a common-sense approach to the State House, with a bright political future in public service.

Senator Raptakis is a powerful voice on issues of concern to the Hellenic-American community and as an elected official, he continues to play an important role in increasing ties between the United States and all the members of the European Union. Raptakis will continue to promote discussions between state and national

elected officials and representatives from the member nations of the European Union.”

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