



**ΠΑΓΚΟΣΜΙΑ ΔΙΑΚΟΙΝΟΒΟΥΛΕΥΤΙΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΥ (ΠΑ.Δ.Ε.Ε)  
WORLD HELLENIC INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (W.H.I.A)**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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### **RI STATE SENATOR LOU RAPTAKIS AND GROUP OF 24 BIPARTISAN HELLENIC-AMERICAN STATE LEGISLATORS REAFFIRM CALL ON BIDEN ADMINISTRATION TO REJECT SALE OF F-16s TO TURKEY AND SUPPORT SENATOR ROBERT MENENDEZ OPPOSITION TO SALE**

**Legislators argue Turkey has been a destabilizing force in Eastern Mediterranean and should not be rewarded for intimidating neighbors, playing role of chaos agent in region and possessing Russian S-400 missile system and will also forward letters to their United States Senators and members of Congress in opposition to the sale**

(COVENTRY, RI 1/29/23) Rhode Island State Senator Lou Raptakis is leading a group of 25 Hellenic-American State Legislators from around the country who are calling on their members of Congress to block the Biden administration's efforts to seek Congressional approval of the potential sale of \$20 billion in F-16 fighter jets and additional modernization equipment to the Turkish regime. The Hellenic –American legislators are urging their Congressional colleagues to reject the ill-conceived and strategically flawed approach to dealing with President Erdogan in the hopes of reversing his bad behavior.

**“United States Senator Robert Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has been a champion for issues regarding Greece and Cyprus and clearly recognizes that Erdogan and the Turkish government are an obstacle to stability in the Eastern Mediterranean and a constant threat to its neighboring countries” said State Senator Lou Raptakis.**

In a recent visit to Washington last week, it was quite telling that the Turkish foreign minister framed the decision in typical authoritarian strongman terms. “The administration should not waste such an important deal between two allies just because one person or a few people are blocking it. It should not bow down.” There is a clear contempt for democracy contained in the statement and a tacit admission that there is ample reason for members of Congress to reject the deal. Erdogan and his administration simply want the Biden White House to do what they would do—bully and threaten to get what they want.

President Erdogan is not a trusted ally and has failed in his willingness to cooperate with Russia and undermine NATO's efforts to isolate Putin over the Ukraine invasion. The Erdogan regime has been happy to play the role of chaos agent in the Eastern Mediterranean, threatening Greece and provoking conflict, all while running multiple military campaigns against US-backed Kurdish forces in Syria. The last thing we should be doing is rewarding this bad behavior with new F-16s and upgrade kits for Turkey's air fleet.

**“Before any such sale should be considered, Turkey should return the S-400 air defense system it secured from Russia, a move that rightly led our government to reject the sale of F-35s to Turkey,” emphasized State Senators Pappas and Raptakis.**

The Hellenic-American State Legislators hope that their Congressional colleagues will oppose this arms sale and continue to take steps to support America's allies in the Eastern Mediterranean. This sale would significantly undermine the long-standing US-Greece Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement, weakening that vital strategic partnership and encouraging the territorial ambitions of the Erdogan regime. Rhode Island State Senator Lou Raptakis added, “To reward them now with a sale of new fighter jets and upgraded weapons program would be unconscionable.”

All of the State legislators also emphasized that, “We need to see a sustained commitment by the Turkish government to stop playing the role of chaos agent in the region before providing them with additional tools to continue their aggressive actions. “

Additionally in calling on their members of Congress to reject the F-16 sales, the legislators said such a deal would significantly undermine the long-standing US-Greece Mutual Defense Cooperation Agreement renewed in 2021 by United States Congress, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias and in 2022 the Hellenic Parliament. They said this agreement represents the best path forward in terms maintaining our strategic partnership and containing the territorial ambitions of the Erdogan regime.

The Hellenic-American legislators aside from being elected in the United States are also working on many issues of concern regarding Greece and Cyprus and associated with the World Hellenic Inter-Parliamentary Association (PADEE-WHIA), an organization that consists of current and former elected state legislators, members of Congress, Parliaments and general officers of Greek descent in non-Greek speaking countries.

## LIST OF STATE LEGISLATORS

State Representative	Diana Papan	D- California
State Representative	Eleni Kavros Degraw	D- Connecticut
State Representative	Nicole-Ditria Klarides	R- Connecticut
State Representative	Christopher Poulos	D- Connecticut
State Representative	Spiros Mantzavinos	D- Delaware
State Representative	Mike Cheokas	R- Georgia
State Representative	Charles Efstration	R- Georgia
State Representative	Josh Cutler	D-Massachusetts
State Senator	John Velis	D- Massachusetts
State Representative	Steven Xiarhos	R- Massachusetts
State Senator	Sandra Pappas	D- Minnesota
State Senator	James Ohrenschall	D- Nevada
State Senator	Andrew Gounardes	D- New York
State Representative	John Lemondes	R- New York
State Senator	James Skoufis	D- New York
State Representative	Michael Tannousis	R- New York
State Representative	Ben Baroody	D- New Hampshire
State Representative	Efstathia Booras	D- New Hampshire
State Representative	Steve Demetriou	R- Ohio
State Senator	Maria Tzanakis Collett	D- Pennsylvania
State Representative	Steve Malagari	D- Pennsylvania
State Senator	Leonidas Raptakis	D- Rhode Island
State Representative	Leon Stavrinakis	D- South Carolina
State Representative	John Spiros	R- Wisconsin
State Senator	Stephan Pappas	R- Wyoming









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