Washington, D.C. (February 14, 2013) - Thursday, Members of Congress, foreign diplomats and the public gathered on Capitol Hill to celebrate the launch of the bi-partisan Congressional Hellenic-Israel Alliance (CHIA). This new Congressional initiative, established by Congressman Gus M. Bilirakis (R-FL) with the help of Congressman Ted Deutch (D-FL), will highlight the relationships forming between Cyprus, Greece and Israel.

“Greece, Cyprus and Israel's strategic location, natural resources and intellectual capital create a natural partnership to address economic, energy and counter-terrorism issues in the Middle East and Europe," said Congressman Bilirakis. "Through the Congressional Hellenic-Israel Alliance, we hope to highlight how the relationships between these countries and the United States are critical to maintaining economic stability and national security."

At the event, which featured remarks by Bilirakis, Deutch, Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren, Greek Ambassador Christos Panagopoulos and Cypriot Embassy Charge d’Affaires Olympia Neocleous, more than 200 people enjoyed authenic Greek and Israeli food, while discussing ways to help the countries grow their relationships.

Close geographic proximity and shared commitment to democracy have the potential to contribute significantly to global defense and economic security; and therefore, merit great attention by U.S. policymakers, the media and the public. This Alliance looks forward to encouraging recognition of these developments and hosting events and subject-matter experts to highlight pertinent issues, including economic, defense and energy cooperation.

"The Congressional Hellenic-Israel Alliance will highlight the strong relationship and growing cooperation between Israel, Greece and Cyprus," said Deutch. "I am pleased to co-chair this caucus with my colleague Congressman Bilirakis, and I look forward to our colleagues joining us in celebrating Hellenic-Israeli relations."

*Rep. Eliot Engel, Rep. Gus Bilirakis, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Rep. Ted Deutch, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, Rep. Steve Israel, Rep. Steve Rothman, Rep. Gerry Connolly, Rep. Ami Bera, Rep. Jerry Nadler, Rep. Ron Kind, Rep. Jim Langevin, Rep. Jim McDermott, Rep. Jim Moran, Rep. Jim Oberstar, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner