

For the next year, Nick Greanias will work with Bilirakis in Washington, D.C., where he will use his diplomatic and religious experience to help the congressman with his assignment on the House Foreign Affairs Committee as well as other policy initiatives. Most recently, Greanias spent three years as the American Consul in Auckland, New Zealand.

Greanias has been an American diplomat for 20 years, serving in Canada, Romania, Ukraine, Greece, New Zealand, and Washington. Prior to that, he was an Army JAG for eight years, and is retired from the U.S. Army Reserve. Greanias is a Greek Orthodox priest, and in addition to his State Department duties, served as his Auckland community's pastor for three years. His parents were Greek immigrants to Decatur, Illinois, where Greanias grew up.

"It will be an honor to have Fr. Nick in my office this year," said Bilirakis, a member International Religious Freedom Caucus. "When he contacted me from Auckland, I knew someone with his vast talent and experience would be an invaluable resource to my staff and would help shape important foreign affairs policy directives which will assist me with my work on the Foreign Affairs Committee. As an ordained Greek Orthodox priest, Fr. Nick will offer us an enhanced perspective of religious freedom from a clergyman's point of view."

Each year, about a dozen State Department Foreign Service Officers apply to spend a year gaining legislative experience through a working experience as congressional staff.

"I'm looking forward to helping Rep. Bilirakis carry on his tradition of emphasizing one of the most basic of human rights we so dearly cherish here in the United States: Promoting religious freedom," Greanias said.