



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Queens Leaders Celebrate Greek Independence Day

MICHAEL GIANARIS March 18, 2019

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ASTORIA, N.Y. – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris, Assemblymember Aravella Simotas, Councilmember Costa Constantinides and Queens Borough President Melinda Katz hosted a celebration of Greek Independence at the Stathakion Center in Astoria. The Queens leaders marked the occasion with a ceremony recognizing Greek heritage and culture, and honoring local community members.

**Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** said, “As the son of Greek immigrants, I am proud to host another Greek Independence Day celebration. There is no better place than Astoria to

recognize our heritage and celebrate the spirit of democracy, freedom and independence that links the U.S. and Greece.”

**Assembly Member Aravella Simotas** said, “It is a privilege to join my colleagues in government to celebrate Greek Independence Day in Astoria, which so many Greek immigrants have called home. Those immigrants and their families have enhanced our beautiful community while they pursued their American dreams. The five extraordinary Hellenes that we honor at this year’s celebration strengthen and promote our Greek heritage daily through our schools, churches and civic engagement. They have my deepest appreciation for lifting up our Greek community and this beautiful borough of Queens that we call home.

**Queens Borough President Melinda Katz** said, “It is an honor to co-host this official celebration of Greek Independence Day with my colleagues in government. We will recognize the many accomplishments Greece has made as the birthplace of democracy and as a beacon of culture and freedom throughout the world. We will also recognize the thousands of Greek Americans who have contributed greatly to the economic, civic, political and cultural life of the Borough of Queens and the City of New York.”

**Council Member Costa Constantinides** said, "I am proud to once again join our strong Greek-American community in Astoria to celebrate Greek Independence Day. We recognize the achievements that all our honorees have made in promoting the Hellenic and democratic values that our Greek ancestors have instilled in us. These community leaders are important role models who embody civic engagement throughout our neighborhood. Thank you to my colleagues, Borough President Katz, Senator Gianaris, and Assembly Member Simotas, for helping our community honor the contributions of Greek-Americans."

Honored at the ceremony this year were: Maria Haralampopoulos, an educator at the Academy of American Studies; Father George Anastasiou, Chaplain with the NYPD; Betsy

Sideris, Principal of St. Catherine's school; Effie Lekas, professor at Queens College; and Florence Koulouris, District Manager of Community Board 1.

Greek Independence Day commemorates the start of the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire in 1821. This year's occasion marked the 197th anniversary of Greek independence.

Photos from the event are available here: <https://bit.ly/2FbhEvf>.