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## *House of Representatives*

### VISCLOSKY HONORS SAINTS CONSTANTINE AND HELEN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Mr. Speaker:** As a member of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association (AHEPA), Chapter 78, it is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I congratulate Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church in Merrillville, Indiana, as its members celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the parish. Father Ted Poteres, along with Parish Council President JoAnn Massow and the congregation, will commemorate this momentous milestone with a celebratory reception on Saturday, May 18, 2013, at the Saints Constantine and Helen Cultural Center in Merrillville, Indiana. Northwest Indiana is especially grateful for the unshakable faith, boundless wisdom, and exemplary service of Father Poteres, a truly outstanding religious leader. I also wish to acknowledge the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos and all the other committed religious leaders who have joined in this celebration.

The founding of Saints Constantine and Helen began when a group of immigrants joined together with the goal of preserving Greek culture and religious tradition for the many Greek families that were moving into the Northwest Indiana region. In 1913, the first worship services were held in a rented store building in Gary, Indiana, making Saints Constantine and Helen the first Greek church in the City of Gary. The name was chosen to signify the importance of Saint Constantine, the Roman emperor who, during the fourth century, permitted the freedom of practicing Christianity, as well as Saint Helen, Saint Constantine's mother, in their fight for the sustenance of their religious beliefs and Greek heritage. The church continued to gain support, and as a result of the congregation's dedicated and unwavering efforts, on Easter Sunday of 1919, Saints Constantine and Helen opened their first church building in Gary.

The church has continually been blessed with extraordinary religious leaders, none more exemplary than Father Ted. And we all recall the appointment of Father Evagoras Constantinides as pastor of Saints Helen and Constantine in 1969. Under his leadership, the Hellenic Cultural Center and the Saints Constantine and Helen Cathedral were constructed in Merrillville, Indiana. Father Ev served as pastor for 26 years and was held in the highest regard by church leaders internationally, by his congregation, and by the entire Northwest Indiana community. Father Evagoras's passing at a time when we are celebrating the parish's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary seems to me to be more than coincidental. I believe it evidences his knowledge that he could join our God firm in his absolute faith in Father Poteres's spiritual leadership, the Parish Council's commitment to future generations, and every parishioner's dedication to preserving their religious beliefs and the incomparable Hellenic culture and values we all hold so dear.

The leaders and parishioners of Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church touch the lives of countless individuals through their compassionate service, especially to those most in need. Over the years, the church has come to the aid of so many people through the church's Helping Hand Fund, which provides financial assistance to those in need. The church also facilitates the Ross Township Food Pantry, which fed approximately 20,000 people during the last year.

Mr. Speaker, I am a strong advocate for the promotion of the ideals and morals of Hellenism throughout all of Northwest Indiana. I ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in honoring Saints Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church as the congregation celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The church leaders and parishioners have dedicated themselves to upholding Greek Orthodox traditions and spiritual beliefs. For their commitment to service, and for touching the lives of countless individuals, they are worthy of the highest praise.