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## Members of Congress Urge Obama to Strengthen US Ties with Ally Turkey

*Send letter expressing strong support for US-Turkish relations prior to President's Upcoming Visit to Turkey*

(Washington, DC) Today, twenty-nine members of the Congressional Caucus on US-Turkish relations sent President Barack Obama a bipartisan letter urging him to enhance US-Turkish relations and to work more closely with Turkish leaders on a number of American, Turkish and international security challenges. Turkey Caucus members sent the strongly worded letter encouraging closer bilateral relations with this key NATO ally, prior to President Obama's upcoming visit to Turkey, which will take place April 5-7, 2009. The letter also advocates that the President support Turkey's efforts to normalize relations with Armenia, Turkey's EU accession efforts and continued security assistance to officials in Ankara as they battle PKK terrorism. Congressman Wexler (D-FL), Co-Chairman of the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and Chairman of the Europe Subcommittee, led the letter along with fellow Turkey Caucus Co-Chairs Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY) and Congresswoman Kay Granger (R-TX), and Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL), Co-Chairman of the US Helsinki Commission.

"It is a testament to the importance of US-Turkish relations that President Obama has chosen to visit Turkey during his first trip abroad as President of the United States. This is truly an historic opportunity to enhance the US-Turkey strategic partnership that has benefited both nations for over five decades," said Congressman Wexler. "As President Obama implements a new strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, addresses the growing threat of Iran's nuclear development, and works to redeploy American troops from Iraq, Turkey's importance as a strategic ally to the United States cannot be understated. It is my hope that President Obama and his Turkish counterparts seize this opportunity to create the conditions for a deeper friendship based on shared values and a common commitment to democracy and human rights. To that end, it is essential that the President unequivocally supports Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia and offers continued assistance to Ankara as it combats PKK terrorists."

"President Obama's upcoming visit to Istanbul and Ankara offers further proof of how much the United States values its relationship with Turkey," said Congresswoman Kay Granger (R-TX). "By virtue of its central location and its democratic government, Turkey has been a key player in the Middle East peace process and an invaluable supporter of U.S. efforts in the region. I applaud the President for recognizing Turkey's importance to global security and stability and look forward to building on our already strong alliance."

"As a member of the Congressional Turkey Caucus, I have always been a staunch supporter and advocate for Turkey. Turkey, in my opinion, remains a key strategic ally to the United States," said Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL). "It is imperative that the United States continue to work to ensure that our alliance with Turkey is strengthened in Congress and with the new Obama administration. President Obama's landmark trip to Turkey comes at a critical for U.S.-Turkish relations and at a time of significant importance in the region. Our shared values and common interests in building a stable, peaceful, and prosperous world exemplify our long and close relationship with Turkey, as evidenced by our partnership in NATO. I remain committed to continuing to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the people of Turkey and Turkish-Americans here in the United States as a friend and ally in the Congress."

"President Barack Obama's historic visit to Turkey presents the United States with an excellent chance to assert and strengthen our relationship with a strategic ally and a critical trading partner. During this time of economic uncertainty and great military challenges, the United States must do all that it can to build upon our ties to foreign nations and promote opportunities to grow the global economy. I am hopeful that President Obama's timely visit to Turkey will foster further goodwill between our two nations and send an important message about the value the United States places on our relationship with Turkey," said Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY).

A copy of the letter is available for [download here](#).

*Congressman Robert Wexler is Chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House Judiciary Committee. Recently, Congressman Wexler served as an advisor on Middle East issues to President Barack Obama during his 2008 presidential campaign.*