

## **Malliotakis & Tannousis Slam Turkish President Erdogan's Decision on Hagia Sophia**



NEW YORK – New York State Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis and Assembly Candidate Michael Tannousis, whom Malliotakis is supporting to succeed her in the State Assembly, on July 12, blasted President Erdogan of Turkey for taking away the museum status of world-famous Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey. Turkey's Council of State annulled the 1935 decision to convert Hagia Sophia into a museum, and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed a decree converting it into a working mosque.

Built almost 1,500 years ago, the location was originally a Christian Cathedral before being converted into a mosque in 1453 following the Ottoman conquest of the city. In 1935, Hagia Sophia became a museum under former Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, and later a UNESCO World Heritage site. It has since been considered a bridge between the two faiths and a strong symbol of coexistence.

“Hagia Sophia is a UNESCO World Heritage site because of its exquisite architecture and unique history as a Greek Orthodox Christian patriarchal

cathedral, a Roman Catholic cathedral, and an Ottoman mosque. It should remain as such for all religions and all the world to enjoy.” said Nicole Malliotakis.

“President Erdogan’s decision to undo Hagia Sophia’s status as a museum is unconscionable and demonstrates his indifference to the faith of millions of individuals across many different backgrounds. While Hagia Sophia may be on Turkish soil, it belongs to the world. As many nations are currently facing an unprecedented global health crisis, it is time for people of all faiths to be unified, not divided,” said Michael Tannousis.

Nicole Malliotakis and Michael Tannousis are nominees of the Republican and Conservative Parties for New York’s 11th Congressional District and 64th State Assembly District respectively.

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