



**TURKISH
COALITION *of*
AMERICA**

Fostering Understanding of Turkish American Issues Through Public Education

2011 Annual Report

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Executive Summary

The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) was founded in 2007 as an educational, charitable organization.



In August 2011, TCA moved into its new headquarters in Washington, DC. Located in the heart of downtown, one block away from Lafayette Park and the White House, the new TCA offices offer a large conference and reception area with a beautiful view of the Washington Monument. The office was formally inaugurated on January 17, 2012 with a lively reception featuring minority community leaders, embassy officials, and Members of Congress. The office has already become a central meeting place and second home for many friends and allies, particularly in the minority communities, where TCA and TCF have worked in recent years to build relationships.

The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) was founded in 2007 as an educational, charitable organization and works to:

- Foster friendship, understanding and cooperation between the United States and Turkey
- Expand Turkish American outreach to American public and private entities
- Promote and advance the interests of the Turkish American community and Turks
- Protect the character and ensure a realistic portrayal of Turkey and Turkish Americans in the media and the arts
- Identify and recognize the achievements of Turkish Americans in academia, arts, business, education, government, public service and science.

TCA's work is undertaken by a professional team, interns and volunteers from offices in Boston, Washington, DC and Istanbul.

G. Lincoln McCurdy, *President*

Guler Koknar, *Vice President*

Basak Kızıldemir, *Vice President, Turkey*

Sevin Elekdag, *Research Fellow*

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Zeynep Guven, *Project Manager*

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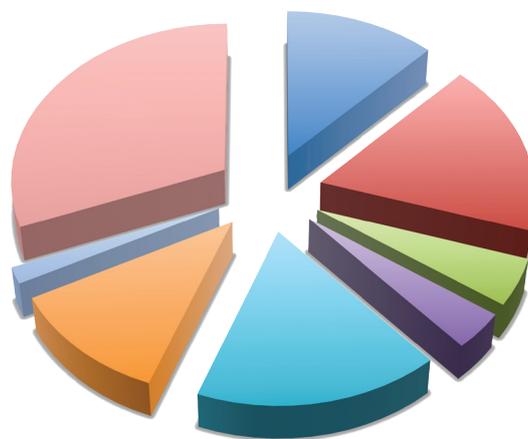
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Turkish Coalition of America
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Financial Statement

The Turkish Coalition of America invested **\$2,684,372.68** in 2011 to pursue its mission and programs. The following is a breakdown of all TCA administrative and program expenses:

Public Education	\$328,213.33
<i>Educational Awareness</i>	\$104,376.75
<i>Public Relations</i>	\$223,836.58
Youth and Education	\$473,848.33
<i>Internships</i>	\$47,795.00
<i>Scholarships</i>	\$205,906.88
<i>University of Utah Program</i>	\$162,646.45
<i>Study Tour Grants</i>	\$22,500.00
<i>Individual institutional Grants</i>	\$35,000.00
Heritage and Humanitarian Grants	\$129,084.32
<i>Haiti Grant</i>	\$50,000.00
<i>Chaldean Grant</i>	\$40,000.00
<i>BAACBH</i>	\$17,249.85
<i>UMD</i>	\$21,834.47
Civic Engagement	\$102,626.97
<i>Council of Turkish Canadians</i>	\$10,000.00
<i>Grassroots Grants</i>	\$87,626.97
<i>Abiska Turkish American Conference</i>	\$5,000.00
Turkish American Legal Defense Fund	\$461,836.34
Congressional Outreach	\$315,118.68
Special Projects	\$45,080.00
<i>ATAA web service</i>	\$10,080.00
<i>Individual Institutions</i>	\$35,000.00
Administrative	\$828,564.71



2011 Total: \$2,684,372.68

Educating the Public

TCA contributes to the accurate portrayal of Turkish Americans and Turkey through a proactive media strategy.

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Year around, TCA's professional team monitors American media and engages with journalists through face-to-face meetings and by providing background information and fact sheets on current issues. TCA officers and experts are featured in electronic and print media on issues of concern to Turkish Americans. TCA Issue Papers are regularly sent to Members of Congress. In 2011, TCA issued 37 Issue Papers and statements that provided information and analysis on current affairs related to Turkey and amplified the position of TCA on relevant issues.

Another source of information for the general public is the TCA website, which features topical, as well as in-depth information on issues concerning Turkish Americans and U.S.-Turkey relations. The website features an extensive compilation of reference material, talking points, and a comprehensive resource and reading list on Turkey. In 2011, the TCA website received over 350,000 visitors.

TCA received consistent coverage in U.S. media outlets in 2011, and was the primary reference for reporters to consult for a Turkish American perspective. TCA was quoted or featured in USA Today, Yahoo! News, McClatchy Newspapers, the New York Times, the Seattle Times, the Miami Herald, the Washington Post, the Baltimore Sun, Seattle Weekly, the National Journal, Congressional Quarterly, Politico, The Hill, Roll Call, the Chronicle of Higher Education, the West Virginia Gazette, the Tulsa World, the Guardian (UK), and other papers throughout the U.S., Turkey and the world. TCA has also been featured on a number of different blogs and online media, including the widely read Huffington Post, BuzzFeed, and other prominent online media publications. TCA's president G. Lincoln McCurdy was featured multiple times on Voice of America broadcasts in 2011. In 2011, TCA also launched a renewed social media campaign to build its presence online. In the last year, the videos on TCA's YouTube page have received nearly 25,000 viewings.

Investing in Youth and Education

TCA Washington Summer Internship Program

The **TCA Washington Summer Internship Program** offers Turkish American college and graduate students the opportunity to work in congressional offices or select governmental and non-governmental organizations based in Washington, DC.

This program is designed to enhance the participation of young Turkish Americans in political life and contribute to the preparation of future Turkish American political leaders.

In 2011, 19 Turkish American students were given the opportunity to intern in the nation's capital. These young Turkish Americans, like those who preceded them, not only benefitted greatly from witnessing how Washington works, but were great Ambassadors for the Turkish American community on Capitol Hill.

In 2011, TCA interns worked in the offices of Congresspersons Nydia Velazquez (D-NY), Virginia Foxx (R-NC), Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Dan Burton (R-IN), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Tom Cole (R-OK), Christopher Murphy (D-CT), Steven Cohen (D-TN), Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Ed Whitfield (R-KY), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), and at several non-profit organizations.

A total of **78 Turkish American students** have received internships under the TCA Washington Summer Internship Program since 2007.

Realizing that Turkish Americans excel in all walks of life, but are often missing from the American civic and political life, TCA is proud to offer two signature youth programs.



TCA Summer 2011 Internship program participants with TCA President Lincoln McCurdy, ATAA Past President Gunay Evinch, and Caspian Group Executive Director Lydia Borland.

"People outside the beltway mostly do not understand Washington's politically charged climate even if they studied political science or international affairs in college. I admit, I was one of them. Through TCA's internship program, I was able to intern with Rep. Ed Whitfield. This experience developed my institutional knowledge of how Congress functions at its core both in its unique structure and intimidating culture. If you're a student or a recent graduate, this may be THE opportunity that gives you the exposure and experience you've been pursuing." Burak Guvensoylar, 2011 TCA Washington Summer Intern.

"My internship with TCA on the Hill has opened so many doors and opportunities for my future. Interning for a U.S. Congressman while serving as a Turkish Youth Ambassador has taught me so much about U.S.-Turkish relations and has provided me with memories of a lifetime. From private jazz concerts at the Turkish Ambassador's residence to intensive panel discussions with the Turkish media and governmental figures, I had the best summer and made the best friends I ever could have hoped for." Sibel Kayaalp, 2011 TCA Washington Summer Intern.

"Through the TCA Washington Summer Internship Program, I was able to solidify my interest in politics. It allowed me to explore the U.S. political system and the city of DC, all while meeting great people with similar interests; and I can definitely say that some of my favorite memories have been from this internship." Saide Ashabaoglu, 2011 TCA Washington Summer Intern.

"The two months I spent interning for TCA and living in DC account for the one of the most exciting and productive eight weeks of my life. What an incredible program!" Sinan Cingilli, 2011 TCA Washington Summer Intern.

Investing in Youth and Education

The TCAdvance Scholarship Program offers a \$5,000 annually renewable scholarship to Turkish American students who aspire to a career in public service, public relations, law, or the media.



Senator Jay Rockefeller(D-WV) and TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy host the TCA reception launching the Robert C. Byrd Memorial Scholarship Program at the U.S. Capitol Visitors Center.

TCAdvance & Robert C. Byrd Scholarship Programs

The **TCAdvance Scholarship Program** offers a \$5,000 annually renewable scholarship to Turkish American students who aspire to a career in public service, public relations, law, or the media. Awarded to graduating high school seniors, college and graduate students, the TCAdvance Scholarship aims to recognize the academic achievements and leadership role of young Turkish Americans and to cultivate a new generation of leaders in our community.

Since the program's inception in 2007, TCA has granted **scholarships to 60 Turkish Americans**. TCAdvance scholars hail from the leading U.S. colleges and stand out not only for their scholastic and personal achievements, but also for their dedication to their heritage and to community service.

Accomplished Turkish Americans attending prestigious schools from across the United States competed for the TCAdvance scholarship in 2011 and 12 new and 9 renewal scholarships were awarded to **21 students**.

2011 also marked the inception of the **TCAdvance-Robert C. Byrd Memorial Scholarship** in memory of legendary West Virginia Senator Robert C. Byrd. The Byrd Scholarship program was launched with the support of the late Senator Byrd's family to support Turkish Americans students hailing from the 13 states of the Appalachian region. The scholarship honors Senator Byrd's historical commitment to building a strong U.S.-Turkey relationship. Kerem Efe Atalay of Centreville, VA earned this prestigious designation as a young Turkish American who fulfills the criteria for the Memorial Scholarship.

"It is with enormous gratitude that I accept my selection by the Turkish Coalition of America as the first Robert C. Byrd Memorial Scholar. The work performed by Senator Byrd during his incredible tenure as the longest-serving senator in United States history serves, as a reminder of what it means to be a representative of the people. The positive effects of his efforts, both for his constituents in West Virginia and for the American-Turkish relationship more broadly, remain apparent to this day. It is with his legacy in mind that I accept this scholarship and the privileges and responsibilities attached to it." Kerem E. Atalay, 2011 TCAdvance – Robert C. Byrd Memorial Scholar.

"The TCAdvance Scholarship assisted me by lessening the economic burden of my college education, but more importantly, it has inspired and lifted me up as I pursue my role as an "Arts and Culture Ambassador" under this program. Furthermore, it allowed me an opportunity to network with and meet other individuals currently attempting to increase awareness about Turkish culture and Turkey. Being a part of this program helped me recognize my potential in organizing successful cultural and social events and helped me foster the growth of my abilities." Ceren Kesici, TCAdvance Scholar 2009-present.

"My TCAdvance Scholarship not only helped me financially, but has also connected me with a strong community of young Turkish Americans supported by TCA. I am encouraged and inspired by my peers and by TCA to achieve the highest level of success, so that I may help strengthen the community of which I feel lucky to be a part." Furkan Unal, TCAdvance Scholar 2008-present.

Building Bridges

TCA's commitment to establishing cross-cultural bridges with American minority communities in the United States manifests itself in a variety of programs.



TCA Study Abroad scholar Josie Green poses in front of the Rumeli Fortress in Istanbul.



TCA Study Abroad scholar Christina Scott at the Ephesus theater.

Scholarships and Educational Exchanges

TCA Study Abroad in Turkey Scholarship Program for Minority Students offers 100 scholarships per calendar year to **African American, Hispanic American** and **Native American** college and graduate students who are accepted to a study abroad program in Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2011, **82 scholarships** were awarded – up from 69 scholarships in 2010 – bringing the total number of recipients since 2007 to 181.

TCA's Study Abroad in Turkey Scholarship Program for Armenian American college and graduate students entered its second year in 2011. Established in 2010, the program also offers up to 100 scholarships per year to Armenian American students who have been accepted to a study abroad program in Turkey or the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The program aims to encourage exchanges between Turks and Armenians and has awarded **5 scholarships** since its inception.

In 2011, TCA maintained its commitment to creating academic bridges between Turkish Universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

TCA-led efforts to build academic bridges between U.S. and Turkey resulted in 8 tuition scholarships offered by Bahcesehir University to African American, Hispanic American and Native American students, and 10 comprehensive scholarships (tuition, room, monthly stipend) offered by the Istanbul Technical University (ITU) to Native American students.

"I am grateful to TCA for this scholarship! I am so excited about my trip overseas and this scholarship means the world to me." Renee John, Baylor University – Bogazici University.

"I am truly grateful for the scholarship TCA awarded to me. At a time when there is much financial uncertainty in the U.S., it is organizations like TCA that make it possible for students to fulfill their dreams and ambitions. I feel extremely honored as a scholarship recipient." Brian Gloria, UC Santa Barbara – Bilkent University.

Building Bridges

TCA Study Tours in Turkey Grant Program

In January 2011 TCA established a new grant program that supports **Study Tours in Turkey**. Designed to encourage more American educational institutions to choose Turkey as a study tour destination, TCA's grant helps subsidize student participation cost in such tours.

This program augments the **TCA Minority Scholarship Program** which, since 2007, has been providing scholarships to individual students from American minority communities – including Native Americans, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Armenian Americans – who pursue part of their education in Turkey.



TCA Study Abroad scholarship recipient Samuel Tafoya and his classmates in Istanbul.



TCA Tour Grant recipient South Dakota State University students make Turkish manti.

In its first year, the TCA Study Tour Grant supported study tours by **Hanover College, Community College of Philadelphia, South Dakota State University** and the Yale University's quarterly magazine, **The Yale Globalist**. Grants totaling **\$12,500** helped reduce the cost of participation for **41 students** on these tours.

"TCA's Study in Turkey Grant program is a great resource for making a study abroad opportunity in Turkey more affordable for students. TCA knows what awaits visitors in Turkey and they are happy to assist the efforts of others toward a most enriching experience of discovery!" **Dr. William Briddick, South Dakota State University, TCA Study Tour Grant Recipient.**

"The TCA Study Tour Grant made our students' experience in Turkey much richer as we could see more places and visit more businesses and organizations. Upon our return a group of students set up a weekly Turkish tea time. Others are curious to find out when the course will be offered next." **Dr. Nasrin Shabinpoor, Hanover College, TCA Study Tour Grant Recipient.**

Heritage Partnerships

To highlight the historical heritage and contemporary bonds of friendship of the Turkish people with its kin and neighbors, TCA has established special **partnerships with the Bosniak and Macedonian communities** in the United States. TCA has provided multi-year grants to the **Advisory Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ACBH)** and the **United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD)**. The TCA grants were designed as matching donations, up to \$50,000 annually to match private donations collected by these two groups. The TCA funds have been designated to support the organizational capacity of these national Bosniak and Macedonian organizations and support their efforts to establish their communities' voices in Washington, DC. In 2011, TCA provided \$21,834.47 to UMD and \$17,249.85 to ACBH, completing its \$150,000 commitment to each of these two organizations.

In a further show of the expanding ties between TCA and the Bosnian and Macedonian American communities, Dr. Yalcin Ayasli, Chairman of TCA, Dr. Ayasli traveled to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia in September 2011. Dr. Ayasli was accompanied on the trip by UMD President Meto Koloski and Chairman Stojan Nikolov and visited

Building Bridges



Dr. Yalcin Ayasli with Macedonian President H.E. Gjorge Ivanov

with the mayors of Ohrid and Bitola (Manastir). In Skopje, Dr. Ayasli was received by His Excellency Gjorge Ivanov, President of Macedonia, and presented the Macedonia Friendship Award of UMD. In Bosnia, Dr. Ayasli visited Sarajevo and Mostar and met with representatives of the Bosniak American community and the Defense Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Selmo Cikotic.

“The cultural, political and economic ties between Turkey and Macedonia and Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina derive their strength from a shared history and culture. The full European and NATO integration of Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina should be a key strategic objective for the United States and the Euro-Atlantic community. In this respect, TCA will continue to help strengthen the voice of the Macedonian and Bosnian heritage communities in the US.”

Dr. Yalcin Ayasli, TCA Chairman

“TCA’s generous multi-year matching grant has enabled the Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina (ACBH) to become the leading Bosnian American organization in the United States. Through TCA’s support, ACBH has been at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and has been able to provide a voice for Bosnian Americans in Washington, DC. Thanks to TCA, U.S. Congressional staff had the opportunity to visit BiH which allowed staff members to learn more about BiH’s culture, people and issues that are facing the country. We look forward to continuing to strengthen our relationship with TCA and helping one another spread peace, democracy and economic stability in the Southeast Europe region.” **Admir Serifovic, President, Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina.**

“The United Macedonian Diaspora (UMD) partnership with TCA has set a new historic testament to the relations between Macedonian and Turkish people, and can be seen in the strong bilateral relationship between Macedonia and

Turkey – Turkey being the first country to recognize Macedonia after independence in 1991. This collaboration is based on mutual respect, carrying on the vision of Ataturk, who we are proud has roots from Macedonia. UMD is grateful that TCA provided us a grant from 2008-2011 helping UMD tremendously in order to advocate on behalf of our nation’s close to half a million Macedonian-Americans. We are pleased this relationship has continued with joint Congressional delegations to Macedonia and Turkey, which is helping to educate Congress on the importance of continued U.S. engagement with the region” **Metodija A. Koloski, President, United Macedonian Diaspora.**

Humanitarian Partnerships

Chaldean Iraqi Refugees Grant

In an effort to alleviate the suffering of thousands of Iraq’s war-torn and displaced Christian refugees in Turkey, in 2009 the Turkish Coalition of America pledged a \$100,000 humanitarian grant to the Chaldean Federation of America (CFA), headquartered in Detroit, Michigan. Under this humanitarian program, administered jointly with the Istanbul-based Turkish Chaldean-Assyrian-Syriac Humanitarian Organization (KADER), humanitarian aid, particularly food and medicine, is provided to Christian refugees from Iraq who live in Turkey. In 2011, TCA distributed the final \$40,000 of this grant. Altogether, the TCA humanitarian aid benefitted 3,850 Iraqi refugee families and 2,150 individual refugees.



(L-R) G. Lincoln McCurdy, President of TCA, Joe Pena, United Way of Miami-Dade, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Serap Odabas Yigit, President of FTAA.

Building Bridges

Haiti Earthquake Relief Grant

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Haiti in 2010, TCA provided \$50,000 to two American non-profit organizations, Cross International and Operation Helping Hands to address the immediate needs of Haitians. The aid was distributed to the two organizations under the guidance of Alcee Hastings (D-FL) and Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), who both represent districts with the highest number of Haitian Americans. In February 2011, TCA provided another \$50,000 to Operation Helping Hands to join efforts to combat the cholera outbreak in Haiti and provided clean water purification devices and medication for thousands of Haitians.

Native American Outreach

In November 2010, TCA organized the first ever **Native American Business Cooperation Trip to Turkey**. This TCA initiative paved the way for Turkey to be the first foreign government to participate in the **25th Annual Reservation Economic Summit (RES)**, the premier American Indian economic and business development conference in the nation in March 2011.

Paying tribute to TCA's efforts to build bridges between Turkish and American Indian communities, in June 2011, the only Native American Member of Congress, Rep. Tom Cole (R-OK) introduced H.R. 2362 – the Indian Tribal Trade and Investment Demonstration Project Act. The legislation authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to select up

to six Indian Tribes or Tribal consortia to participate in a demonstration project that facilitates trade and financial investment in Indian Tribal economies by private entities from Turkey. Co-sponsored by 12 Members of Congress, the legislation passed the Subcommittee on Indian and Alaska Native Affairs in November 2011, where TCA President G.Lincoln McCurdy testified.

While H.R. 2362 was gaining momentum, in October 2011, TCA facilitated **'An Initiative for Infrastructure Development Cooperation between Turkey and Indian Country'** – a weeklong workshop sponsored by the Istanbul Technical University (ITU). The workshop, attended by Native American leaders and representatives from Louisiana, North Dakota, New Mexico, Minnesota and Montana, was timed to coincide with an exhibition spearheaded by TCA. **'Native Americans: Memory of an Ottoman Connection,'** was a unique exhibit of photographs depicting members of more than 31 Native American tribes gifted by the Smithsonian Institution to Sultan Abdulhamid II, of the Ottoman Empire.

On November 17, TCA partnered with the Turkish Embassy to commemorate the **American Indian and Alaska Native Heritage Month** with a reception featuring Turkish and Native American cultural performances.

"The National American Indian Housing Council (NAIHC) is thankful for the positive relationship and partnership with the Republic of Turkey and the Turkish Coalition of America. For both Indian Country and Turkey, this is an important and exciting first step in exploring how international partners can build upon our mutual goals of economic and community development. NAIHC's relationship with Turkey has helped us place the important housing needs of Native American people on the global stage. We look forward to further developments and cooperation in the future."
Cheryl Causley, Chairwoman, National American Indian Housing Council.



TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy after a panel with Mr. Cemalettin Damlaci, Deputy Undersecretary for Foreign Trade and tribal leaders at the 25th Reservation Economic Summit in Las Vegas, NV.

In the Community

Since its founding, TCA has supported Turkish American and Turkish Canadian organizations in their efforts to strengthen the Turkish voice in North America through education and civic participation.



Speakers and participants at the Council of Turkish Canadian's Youth Conference gather for a group picture celebrating a successful weekend.

"The American Friends of Turkey (AFOT) was a venerable organization that had languished for a few years until the Turkish Coalition of America breathed new life into the organization. A generous "rejuvenation" grant from TCA allowed us to restructure ourselves, focus on a few good projects, reach out across America, and begin some innovative grassroots projects. One year into the grant we have indeed moved far along the modernization path and have been able to re-energize this fine organization. Financial - and more importantly - moral support and encouragement from TCA has made all the difference to us, and has allowed us once again to make a significant contribution to the strengthening of people-to-people relations between Turkey and America." Elizabeth Shelton, Executive Director, AFOT.

Supporting Turkish American Community Growth

In 2011, TCA continued to support the **Assembly of Turkish American Associations (ATAA)** and the **Federation of Turkish American Associations (FTAA)**. TCA provided \$22,500 to ATAA and \$9,200 to FTAA, helping them to underwrite their grassroots education programs. In addition, TCA provided a \$10,000 grant to sponsor the ATAA/FTAA Leadership Conference in Washington, DC in March 2011.

TCA also provided support to the Council of Turkish Canadians (CTC) by providing two grants totaling \$ 10,000 to CTC for the organization's national leadership and youth conferences in 2011.

In 2011, TCA awarded a multi-year grant to American Friends of Turkey (AFOT) to support the institutional growth of the organization and the AFOT lecture program. In 2011, AFOT received \$57,900 in TCA funding.

TCA provided a grant to Eastword, a history-focused non-profit organization to produce a documentary on Crimean Tatars to preserve oral histories of this long persecuted Turkic community and help combat prejudice and discrimination toward Crimean Tatars today.

TCA continued to support the Ahiska Turkish community, the newest Turkic immigrant community in the United States. In 2011, TCA provided a \$5,000 to underwrite the Turkish American Solidarity Conference organized by the Ahiska Turkish American Community Center in Dayton, Ohio.

"ATAA is grateful to TCA for generously providing half the funds needed to hire a full-time TABAN (Turkish American Broad Advocacy Network) professional. Also called the Civic Engagement Director, this professional criss-crosses the country and reaches out to ATAA's component associations coast-to-coast, with well crafted half-day programs featuring messages of participatory democracy and student outreach. This is a growth-oriented program focusing on the immediate future of our community and it would not be possible without financial assistance from TCA. ATAA, the premier, membership based, secular, non-profit umbrella organization, promoting U.S.- Turkey relations, is proud to have TCA as a strategic partner." Ergun Kirlikovali, President, ATAA.

Defending Turkish American Rights

TCA established Turkish American Legal Defense Fund in 2009 to protect and defend free speech, expression, assembly, and other constitutional or legal rights of Turkish Americans.

During 2011, TALDF continued its mission of encouraging Turkish Americans to participate in American civil society and political processes without fear, intimidation, bigotry, prejudice, or discrimination.

Among this year's highlights: In **TCA and S. Cingilli v. University of Minnesota**, TALDF continued to represent TCA and a University of Minnesota student who challenged whether a state university can maintain a list of "unreliable websites" that is labeled as "engaging in genocide-and Holocaust-denial" for conveying the Turkish perspective. The list was dismantled on the eve of filing suit, but damages for past harm and attorney's fees remain in dispute.

The case is now under submission before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. TALDF also continued to track and respond to state legislation that stigmatized Turkish Americans or falsely portrayed Turkey or Turkish-U.S. relations.

Additionally, TALDF attorneys participated in several conferences and spoke to student groups nationally and in Canada.

In 2011 TALDF concluded its successful representation of U.S. Representative Jean Schmidt.

In 2011, the Turkish Coalition of America provided TALDF with \$461,836.34 in funding to pursue its mission.

TCA established Turkish American Legal Defense Fund in 2009 to protect and defend free speech, expression, assembly, and other constitutional or legal rights of Turkish Americans.



HOME	YOUR RIGHTS
YOUR RIGHTS	You Have Rights, But You Must Speak Out
ISSUES & CASES	The pronounced biases in certain parts of American society against Turkey, persons of Turkish ethnicity, and the Ottoman Empire can be dispelled if the usual stereotypes, caricatures, and errors are disputed in the classroom, in town meetings, in public gatherings, and in all manner of public gatherings. These day-to-day refutations are the best vehicle for altering general attitudes towards Turkey and Turks, which translates into fairer treatment by local, state, and national government. TALDF arms Turkish Americans with knowledge of their legal rights to freedom of expression, which should encourage them to speak openly and forcefully against historical mistakes or distortions about Turkey, its history and heritage, without fear of retaliation.
COMMENTS	Add Your Perspective In Lieu of Suppressing Someone Else's
CONTACT	Correspondingly, we firmly believe that Turkish Americans should eschew attempts to suppress biased or twisted speech in favor of adding a Turkish perspective to the free marketplace of ideas. Students and adults alike should be trusted to draw reasonable conclusions based on their exposure to a rich array of educationally suitable viewpoints. Indoctrination is not education. It stunts the mind and the ability to think. Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis had the right idea by insisting that the proper remedy for foolish or mistaken speech is more speech, not enforced silence.
LINKS	The constitutional right to freedom of expression is enshrined in the First Amendment and hundreds of Supreme Court decisions interpreting the Constitution's text. The Supreme Court has repeatedly lectured that neither legislators nor educators may suppress or muffle an idea because it is politically unpopular. The First Amendment, however, draws a sharp distinction between government action and private speech. While the amendment prohibits government officials and laws from discriminating against disliked ideas, ordinary citizens may do so. The First Amendment does not prohibit a private organization to require members to subscribe to the Armenian genocide. On the other hand, private citizens may be sued for defamation if they falsely accuse Turkish Americans of odious activities to frighten them into silence or otherwise.

The following First Amendment principles are most relevant to Turkish Americans:

- *Turkish Americans cannot be denied public jobs or be demoted or fired because of the views they hold on any issue, such as the Armenian issue, the PKK, Cyprus, or any other issue of special concern to Turkish Americans. Nor can they be denied an opportunity to speak on equal terms with other attendees in a public forum, including city council or board of education meetings.
- *Turkish Americans cannot be denied public permits or licenses to demonstrate or rally in support of specific views.
- *Turkish Americans may insist that public instruction on issues relating to Turkey or the Ottoman Empire be based solely on educational suitability, and not on the political power of Armenians, Greeks, Greek-Cypriots, or otherwise.
- *Turkish Americans may petition state educational authorities to alter or supplement textbook materials to enrich their educational value.
- *Turkish Americans may protest biased or misleading lectures in public education. The protests should demand more speech and additional viewpoints, not suppression of objectionable views.
- *Turkish Americans may petition city councils, mayors, state officials, Members of Congress, and the President to complain about prejudices, stereotypes, or errors on matters of concern to them. But they do not have a right to have all their complaints accepted.
- *Turkish Americans have the same right of access to public or public school bulletin boards to post their views as any other group.

TALDF will seek to resolve problems through both legal and non-legal avenues. Some issues can be resolved with a firm letter. Others can be settled with mediation. A lawsuit generally should be the last remedy.

Turkish Americans, however, must be vigilant in detecting problems and bringing them to the attention of TALDF. Passivity is unacceptable. All that is necessary for bigotry and injustice to triumph is for good Turkish Americans to do nothing.

We seek your active involvement. Your rights can be preserved, but you must speak out. If you feel that you or your child has been the victim of suppression of free speech or similar right, please contact us and we will help you to evaluate the matter and, if necessary, identify methods and resources for seeking redress.

TALDF CONTACTS:
Bruce Fein EMAIL
David Saltzman EMAIL

TCA has made it a prime objective for the Turkish American community to increase the membership of the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkish Relations and Turkish Americans.



G. Lincoln McCurdy, TCA President, greets Congressman David Price (D-GA) at the start of the Turkish Caucus Day reception.



Guler Koknar, TCA Vice President, and Lincoln McCurdy, TCA President, pose with Turkish Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY), Congressman Jim Moran (D-VA), as well as ATAA representatives Nurten Ural and Oya Bain at the Turkish Caucus Day reception.

Strengthening the Voice of Turkish Americans

TCA strengthens the voice of Turkish Americans through monitoring legislation that concerns the community and enabling Turkish Americans to use the **TCA Action Alert Center** to contact their Members of Congress.

The TCA Action Alert Center has also been provided free of charge to other Turkish American organizations, as well as partners of TCA. TCA also regularly provides information and analyses to Members of Congress and their staff through TCA Issue Papers sent via fax and e-mail bulletins. In 2011, 37 TCA Issue Papers, covering important issues related to Turkey and U.S.-Turkey relations have been published.

Supporting the Turkish Caucus

TCA has made it a prime objective for the Turkish American community to increase the membership of the **Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkish Relations and Turkish Americans**.

The hitherto unpublished membership of the Turkish Caucus was made public by TCA in 2007 and the Caucus' membership reached a **historical high of 132 in 2011**, over one quarter of the House of Representatives, representing 35 U.S. states and all 6 territories.

TCA has engaged members of the Turkish Caucus in new and creative ways. TCA has sponsored numerous events relating to the mission of the Turkish Caucus, facilitated the participation of Turkish Caucus members in Turkish American events, promoted the work of its individual members and has integrated TCA programs, such as its minority scholarships and cultural programs with the members' own constituent services.

A major highlight of TCA's work in collaboration with Turkish Caucus leadership was a day filled with events commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Caucus's establishment. Over 350 people attended a luncheon and reception hosted by TCA on this Turkish Caucus day, including 29 Members of Congress and nearly 300 congressional staffers.



TCA-sponsored June 2011 Congressional delegation in front of Anıtkabir

Congressional Delegations to Turkey

Since May 2009, when TCA organized its first Congressional Delegation to Turkey, TCA has become the third largest organizer of foreign travel for Members of Congress and staff. As of 2011, TCA has taken 116 Members of Congress and senior staffers to Turkey.

In 2010, according to a report published by U.S. News and World Report, TCA became the second largest ethnic/regional organization to sponsor foreign congressional travel, after the American Israel Education Foundation, an affiliate of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

The first congressional TCA delegation of 2011 was organized in May 2011 when TCA took a bipartisan delegation of **8 senior staffers led by Congressman Brad Miller (D-NC)** to Turkey. The group participated in Bahcesehir University's annual Global Leadership Forum and also conducted several high-level meetings in Ankara.

In July 2011, TCA took **10 senior staffers** to Turkey. Their itinerary included meetings with U.S. Embassy and Turkish officials, think tank experts, civil society and business leaders, academics, and members of the press. In addition to attending meetings in Ankara and Istanbul, the group visited the famed Gallipoli battlefields on the shores of the Dardanelles and walked in Homer's footsteps among the ancient ruins of Troy. This group was the first to be granted a glimpse of the nearly fully-restored Bouleteurion (council chamber) in Patara, the capital of the ancient Lycian Federation, considered to be the earliest example of Republican form of government, and an inspiration to America's Founding Fathers.

The September 2011 trip marked the 11th Congressional delegation sponsored by TCA. This group of 10 senior staffers made a brief stopover in Girne and Lefkosa to witness firsthand the current situation in Cyprus before continuing on to Turkey. While visiting the Turkish Republic of

In Congress



May 2011 TCA Congressional trip participants to Turkey including Congressman Brad Miller (D-NC) on the Golden Horn.



TCA representatives and September 2011 Congressional delegation participants had the opportunity to witness the realities on the ground in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus before continuing on to meetings in Turkey.

Northern Cyprus (TRNC), participants traveled along the Green Line and were hosted by the Speaker of the TRNC Parliament, Dr. Hasan Bozer and Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry. Continuing on to Turkey, the group first met with U.S. and Turkish officials in Ankara. From there the delegation traveled to Patara, and then Istanbul, for a series of meetings with representatives of civil society, the business community, think tanks, academics and students from Bahcesehir University.

“Being a part of a staff delegation to Turkey and Cyprus was a tremendous learning experience. The Turkish Coalition of America carefully set up each part of the trip to ensure participants received a broad array of information from various entities within each country. They gave honest and direct answers to all staff questions. I returned with an improved understanding and sincere interest in Turkish-American relations.” **Kelsey H. Mishkin, Senior Legislative Assistant Raul M. Grijalva (D-AZ)**

“The Turkish Coalition of America provided an extraordinary learning experience on Turkey and its history, politics and culture. It was an invaluable opportunity to understand Turkey, its evolving democracy and Turkey’s growing significance as a regional power. TCA’s organization and management of the intensive itinerary was excellent. Congressional staff whose Members follow Turkey and related issues are well-served by participating in the TCA program.” **Bruce Wolpe, Senior Advisor, Congressman Henry Waxman (D-CA)**

“The Turkish Coalition of America (TCA) has done an outstanding job of creating strong relationships between Turkey, Turkish-Americans, and the U.S. Congress. Traveling to Turkey with TCA was an invaluable experience filled with many wonderful memories. The schedule was extremely comprehensive, and allowed for the staff delegation to be exposed to all aspects of Turkish society and culture. I believe that Turkey remains a key strategic ally in the region and my trip clearly reinforced that fact.” **Lale Mamaux, Chief of Staff, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-FL)**

“The TCA trip was extremely valuable in providing a level of nuance, understanding, and dimension necessary to understanding Turkey and the region. It was a fulfilling experience and the trip offered a broad perspective on the cultural, political and economic layers of this important international stakeholder.” **Mischa Fisher, Legislative Director, Congressman Randy Hultgren (R-IL)**

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