

TURKISH COALITION *of* AMERICA



2016 Annual Report



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Executive Summary

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

TCA LEADERSHIP

YALCIN AYASLI, *Chairman*

G. LINCOLN MCCURDY, *President*

BASAK KIZILDEMIR, *Vice President, Turkey Representative*

TCA STAFF

LIZ CLARK, *Project Coordinator*

KATE COSTELLO, *Consultant*

CAROL ANN JACKSON, *Executive Assistant, Boston*

SEZAN MCDANIEL, *Project Coordinator*

GULHAN OZKAN, *Executive Assistant, Turkey*

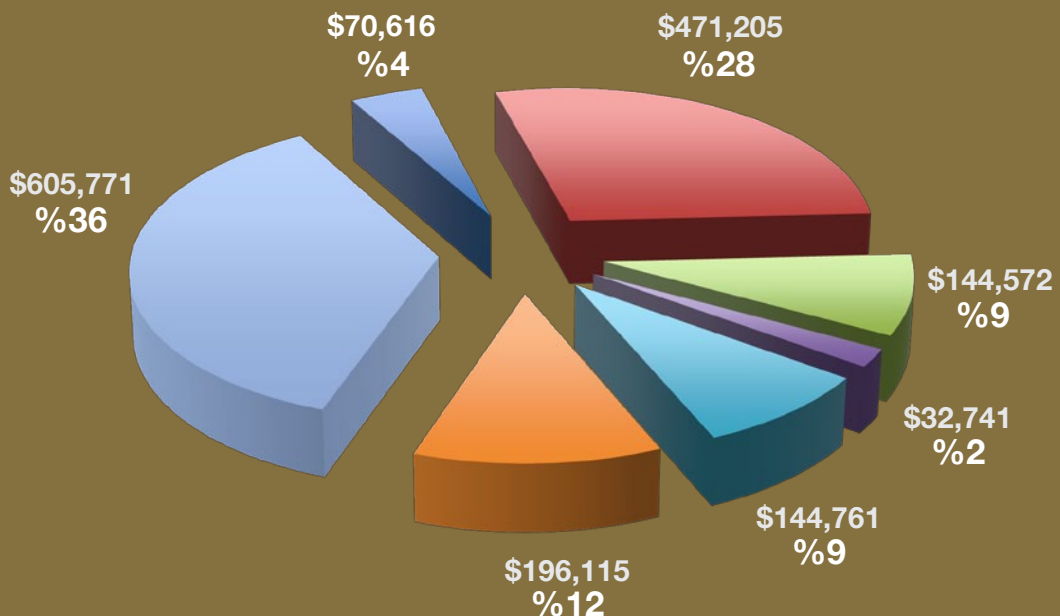
LOUETTE RAGUSA, *Executive Assistant, Washington, DC*

DAVID SALTZMAN, *Counsel*

Financial Statement

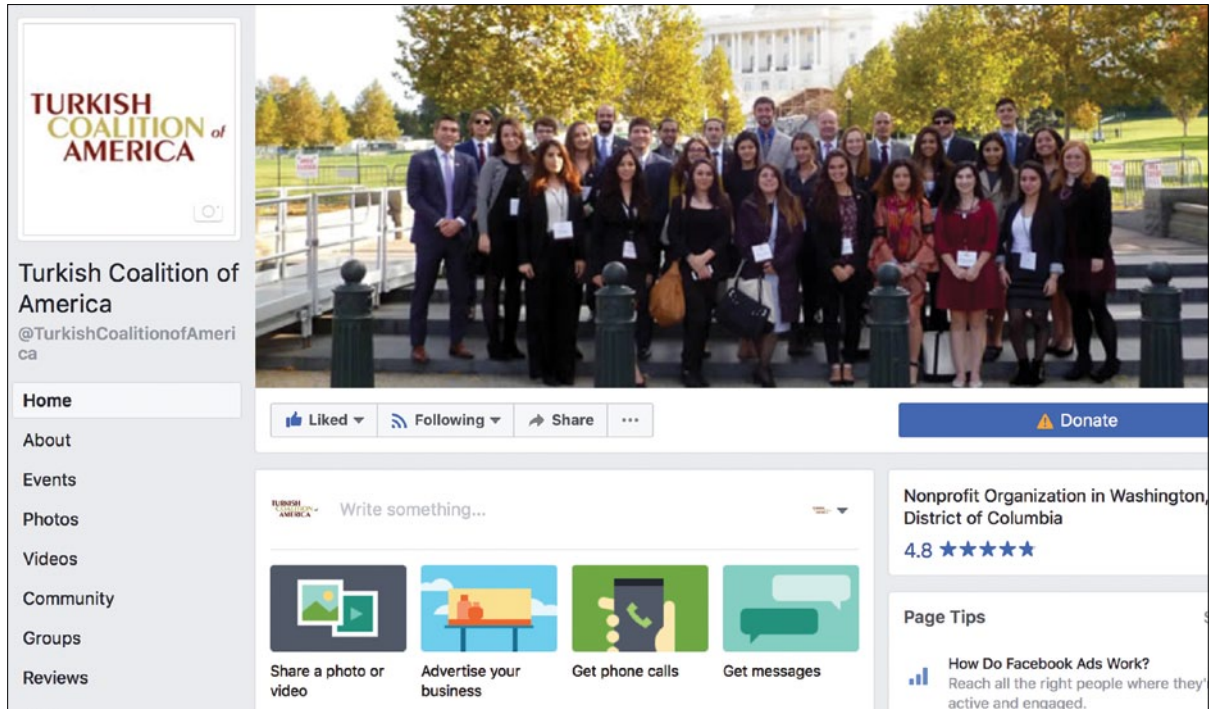
Turkish Coalition of America invested a total of \$1,665,781 in 2016 to pursue its mission and implement its programs. The following is a categorized breakdown of all TCA administrative and program expenses.

■ PUBLIC EDUCATION	\$70,616
Educational and Public Awareness	
■ YOUTH AND EDUCATION	\$471,205
Internships	
Scholarships	
Youth Congress	
University of Utah Turkish Studies Project	
■ HERITAGE AND HUMANITARIAN GRANTS	\$144,572
UMD & ACBH – Supplemental Office Grant	
Syrian Refugee Campaign	
■ CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	\$32,741
Grassroots Grants	
Community Sponsorships	
■ CONGRESSIONAL OUTREACH	\$144,761
■ SPECIAL PROJECTS	\$196,115
Turkish American Legal Defense Fund	
Web Design	
■ ADMINISTRATIVE	\$605,771



Educating the Public

Through outreach efforts and a proactive strategy, TCA works to ensure accurate and balanced media portrayals of Turkish Americans and Turkey.



Throughout 2016, TCA's team monitored American, Turkish, and international media. TCA staff engaged with journalists through in-person meetings and by providing fact sheets and information about both history and current events regarding Turkish Americans and Turkey.

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 materials, talking points, and resource and reading lists on Turkey. In 2016, the TCA website received 1,153,265 hits.

In 2016, TCA continued its social media campaign to expand its online presence. In the last year, TCA's [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) profiles reached thousands of people.

Investing in Youth and Education

TCA is proud of its pillar programs for youth that are designed to enrich Turkish American participation in public affairs and to foster future generations of Turkish American leaders.

TCA Washington Summer Internship Program



2016 TCA Washington Summer Interns

The TCA Washington Summer Internship Program provides young Turkish American college students and recent graduates the opportunity to work in Washington, DC as interns with members of the U.S. Congress and select non-governmental organizations and think tanks. The goal of the program is to foster young Turkish Americans' interest in public affairs and service as well as enhance their knowledge of American political life. It also seeks to prepare future Turkish American political and community leaders.

In 2016, 14 Turkish American students completed internships through the TCA Washington Summer Internship Program. Participants learned firsthand about the U.S. political process and how Washington operates while gaining valuable career experience in the nation's capital. Over the course of their internships, these young Turkish Americans became great ambassadors for their communities and for Turkey on Capitol Hill and in the surrounding policy community.

“

The TCA summer internship program was a great experience for me. I got to work with and meet amazing people who helped further cultivate my passion for politics and strengthen my ties to the Turkish American community. As a proud Turkish American, my TCA summer internship made me more politically active and conscious in regards to my ethnic identity and it was an invaluable experience for me.”

-Deniz Demirci, 2016 TCA Washington Summer Intern, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB)

Investing in Youth and Education

The 2016 TCA interns worked in the offices of Representatives Robert Aderholt (R-AL/4th), Barbara Comstock (R-VA/10th), Henry Cuellar (D-TX/28th), Alan Grayson (D-FL/9th), Frank Guinta (R-NH/1st), Alcee Hastings (D-FL/20th), and Adam Kinzinger (R-IL/16th), as well as the American Turkish Council (ATC), the Atlantic Council, the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD), and the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Turkish Heritage Organization (THO), and the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA).

Since the program's inception in 2007, TCA has provided a total of 162 internship opportunities to Turkish Americans and friends of Turkey.

As a part of the Washington Summer Intern Program, TCA hosted the annual Summer Intern Orientation Session at its Washington, DC office on July 22. Interns gathered for a day of professional development and briefings about TCA, the [Turkish Cultural Foundation](#) (TCF), the [Turkish American Legal Defense Fund](#) (TALDF), the Turkish American community, and political activism and engagement in the U.S.

“

TCA's Summer Internship Program provided me an incredible opportunity to gain firsthand experience with U.S.-Turkey relations. Without TCA's support, I could not have made my way to Capitol Hill. My participation in the meetings, briefings and seminars associated with the internship helped me develop a professional network and understand how the U.S. system works in a real world setting. I truly appreciate TCA for this rewarding experience.”

-Adam Karayel, 2016 TCA Washington Summer Intern, Congressman Alcee Hastings (D-FL/20th)

“

The internship with TCA gave me the opportunity to gain not only a phenomenal experience but also meet well-rounded individuals who are so enthusiastic about their jobs and careers.”

-Gulnaz Allaniyazova, 2016 TCA Washington Summer Intern, Turkish Coalition of America



2016 TCA Washington Summer Interns at the TCA office

Investing in Youth and Education

TCA Turkish American Youth Leadership Congress



2016 Youth Congress delegates in front of the U.S. Capitol

The annual Turkish American Youth Leadership Congress is a program specifically geared toward involving young Turkish Americans in the U.S. political system. It offers college students, recent graduates, and young professionals of Turkish American heritage the opportunity to spend a weekend in Washington, DC learning about the U.S.-Turkey relationship, the political systems of both countries, and the importance of political advocacy in their own lives.

2016 marked TCA's third annual Turkish American Youth Leadership Congress. Twenty-five young Turkish Americans attended and came away inspired to take a more active role in local and national politics and to become effective representatives of the Turkish American community.

Since the program began in 2014, 84 Turkish Americans have attended the Turkish American Youth Leadership Congress. Applications for the Youth Congress open every year in July.

“

One of the best decisions of my life was to attend TCA's Youth Congress. I got to meet so many young dedicated Turkish Americans and had a wonderful time in D.C. I look forward to being involved with TCA in the future.”

-Muhammet Ozdemir, Ludlow, MA, 2016 Turkish American Youth Congress Delegate

“

TCA's Youth Congress gave me a chance to meet other Turkish Americans and learn more about the political process. I left feeling empowered, capable, and inspired. Having the chance to visit D.C. and have these interactions was one of the highlights of my year.”

-Lauren Ozdemir, Columbia, SC, 2016 Turkish American Youth Congress Delegate

Investing in Youth and Education

2016 Youth Congress delegates attended meetings and briefings with Turkish policy experts, congressional staffers, former member of Congress Bob Carr (D-MI, 1975-1981 and 1983-1995), the U.S. Department of State, political activists, and leaders in the Turkish American community. Over the course of the weekend, they were able to network with other young Turkish Americans while learning about the U.S.-Turkey relationship and the political systems of both countries. They engaged in an active dialogue on the state of U.S.-Turkey relations and the 2016 U.S. election, and they also learned about the role of citizens in policy-making and the steps they could take to be successful Turkish American advocates.

Delegates toured the U.S. Capitol and the Turkish Ambassador's historical residence, and their visit to the nation's capital was topped off with a jazz concert at the historic Howard Theatre and a tour of the monuments on the National Mall.

“

Attending TCA's Youth Congress was an amazing opportunity for me. I will never forget the things I learned or the memories I made.”

-Doga Barut, Boca Raton, FL, 2016 Turkish American Youth Congress Delegate

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The TCA Youth Congress was a great experience as a young college student. It was a great way to learn about and become more active in American civic and political life.”

-Yusuf Ozen, Rochester, NY, 2016 Turkish American Youth Congress Delegate



2016 Youth Congress delegates at the U.S. Capitol

Investing in Youth and Education



2016 Youth Congress delegates in front of the Ataturk statue at the Turkish Ambassador's residence in Washington, DC



2016 Youth Congress delegates at the Turkish Ambassador's residence in Washington, DC

Investing in Youth and Education

TCA - University of Utah Turkish Studies Project



Entrance to the University of Utah in Salt Lake City

In 2016, TCA continued to fund the [Turkish Studies Project](#) at the University of Utah, which is directed by University of Utah Professor Dr. M. Hakan Yavuz. TCA provided this major [multi-year grant](#) to the University of Utah in 2009 to establish an academic program to examine the origins of modern ethnic cleansing, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the emergence of nation states in the Balkans and the Caucasus. The grant was renewed in 2015 with an expanded geographical focus entitled “The Origins and Contemporary Challenges of Turkic Peoples.” Under the current grant term, the Project aims to explore the past histories and shaping of contemporary Turkic-majority states and their relationships with modern Turkey via scholarly work, community participation, social media, and support for new research.

The Turkish Studies Project in 2016 provided fellowships to graduate students and scholars who are undertaking research about Turkic peoples and states and their relationships with

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I would like to express my gratitude for TCA’s generous support of my graduate studies at the University of Utah. As with other scholarships I received from the Turkish Studies Project in the past, this bursary is timely. This support will provide me the sufficient stress-free time to concentrate on my studies. I am truly indebted to TCA.”

-Hakan Erdagoz, Turkish Studies Project Fellow

“

The Turkish Studies Fellowship has been unique in two main ways. First, it allowed me to connect with major scholars and professionals in the fields of Turkish and Balkan studies. Secondly, the fellowship was vital to my professional development as a researcher. I am very grateful to the Turkish Coalition of America for its continued support to my education.”

-Perparim Gutaj, Turkish Studies Project Fellow

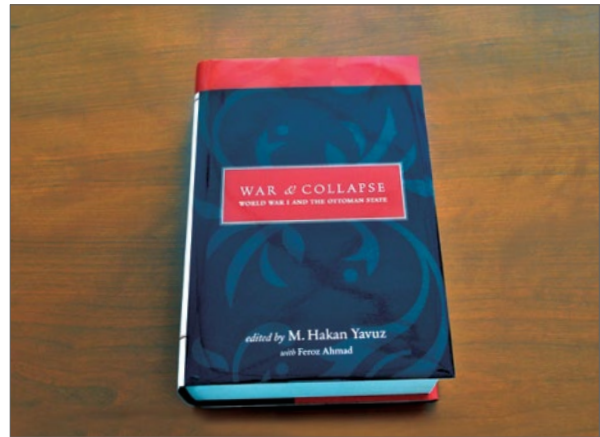
Investing in Youth and Education

modern Turkey. The program also provided support for them to attend and present at conferences in the U.S., Turkey, and Europe and to translate scholarly material to English. In addition, the Turkish Studies Project held a conference in Salt Lake City, Utah to bring together the best scholars in the field. The conference focused on Jadidism and its effects on Islam, modernity, and national identity in Russia and Central Asia.

In 2016, a number of academic and journalistic writings composed under the Turkish Studies Project were published or selected for future publication. These works included several chapters of *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz with Feroz Ahmad and published by the University of Utah Press.

In addition, the project's Ph.D. fellow Tal Buenos successfully defended his dissertation on the formation of the concept of genocide and published numerous newspaper articles and scholarly works, including an article published in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State* entitled "Beyond Complicity: British Responsibility for the Massacres of Armenians in World War I." Turkish Studies Project Fellow Perparim Gutaj completed his dissertation on the patterns of ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, which he is scheduled to defend in the fall of 2017. His study is the first attempt to develop a region-based pattern of nation building through the policies of ethnic cleansing. Postdoctoral fellow Brad Dennis completed a book currently under review for publishing entitled *The Origins of Ethnic Conflict in Anatolia: Kurds and Turks* and wrote several academic articles selected for future publication. The Turkish Studies Project has also provided support to Hakan Erdagoz, who successfully completed and defended his Ph.D. dissertation on exploring the construction of Turkophobia in Europe by tracing historically shifting discourses of religious diversity in a comparative study of France and Russia.

In addition, the Turkish Studies Project supported and promoted a number of other publications in 2016.



War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State, edited by M. Hakan Yavuz with Feroz Ahmad, recently published by the University of Utah Press

Building Bridges

TCA has enhanced its educational mission by sponsoring a diverse collection of scholarship programs.

TCA Study Abroad Scholarship for American Students of Minority and Heritage Communities



2016 TCA scholarship recipient Ilham Ali of the University of Alabama exploring Turkey while studying abroad at Bogazici University

Through the [TCA Study Abroad Scholarships for American Students of Minority and Heritage Communities program](#), TCA provides up to 100 scholarships per year for American students of African, Armenian, Bosnian, Filipino, Hispanic, Macedonian, and Native American descent who have been accepted to a study abroad program in Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Through the TCA Study Abroad Scholarships for American Students of Minority and Heritage Communities program, TCA provides up to 100 scholarships per year for American students of African, Armenian, Bosnian, Filipino, Hispanic, Macedonian, and Native American descent who have been accepted to a study abroad program in Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In 2016, 13 scholarships were awarded, bringing the total number of scholarships awarded to 481 since this program's inception in 2008. American minority students who

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I often find it difficult to explain the depth of my experience in Turkey. Istanbul welcomed me in the kindest of ways and taught me about her heritage. I explored Anatolia and the European center, and I still love the Turkish language and interacting with Turkish people living around the world. I look forward to the day that I return to my dear Turkiye.”

-Ilham Ali, University of Alabama, 2016 TCA Scholarship Recipient at Bogazici University

Building Bridges

receive the TCA Study Abroad Scholarship studied in subject areas ranging from Accounting to Architecture, with the most popular subjects being business and political science.

Scholarship recipients came from American colleges and universities across the country, the most widely represented institutions being Valdosta State University, the University of Michigan, San Francisco State University, and the University of Alabama. Scholarship recipients studied at Yeditepe, Bogazici, and Koc Universities in Istanbul, Turkey; Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey; and the American University of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.



2016 TCA scholarship recipient Julian Luke of the University of California Merced visits Cappadocia, Turkey



2016 TCA scholarship recipient Olaide Owolabi of SUNY Cobleskill in Istanbul, Turkey

“

I would like to thank the Turkish Coalition of America for the great opportunity it gave to students such as myself to study abroad. While in Turkey, I learned so much about myself. Turkey is a country I can now call a second home. Although one can say that Turkey is culturally rich, I believe that one should really get to know individuals and make relationships with the individuals in this country, as that is where you can truly become immersed in the experience and fascinated with the culture.”

-Julian Luke, University of California Merced, 2016 TCA Scholarship Recipient at Bilkent University

“

My study abroad experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina would not have been possible had it not been for the generous support of the Turkish Coalition of America's minority scholarship program. The funding allowed me to travel throughout the country to learn about the many efforts the Turkish government has made to help reconcile and rebuild Bosnia and Herzegovina following the war of the 1990s.”

-Emina Ibrahimovic, Indiana University, 2016 TCA Scholarship Recipient at the American University of Bosnia and Herzegovina

“

Istanbul, to put it simply, is a city that lives and thrives on the vibrant souls of the people and culture that call this place home. My experience there was my awakening to the possibilities that immersing myself in another country's culture can do for my own perspectives in life. I am thankful and forever in gratitude for the experiences this city has given me. My time ultimately made me more open to new experiences and compassionate toward the experiences of others.”

-Jasmin Tomas, San Francisco State University, 2016 TCA Scholarship Recipient at Koc University

Building Bridges

Heritage Partnerships



Elmina Kulasic, Senior Advisor at the Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide; Liz Clark, TCA Project Coordinator; Munira Subasic, President of the Mother's Action of the Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves; Murat Tahirovic, President of the Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide; and Ajla Delkic, Executive Director of ACBH at Bosnian Women's Day on Capitol Hill

TCA established special [partnerships](#) with the Bosniak and Macedonian communities in the United States to enhance the historical heritage and contemporary bonds of friendship that the Turkish people have with their Balkan neighbors. Over the years, TCA has provided support to the [Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) (ACBH) and to the [United Macedonian Diaspora](#) (UMD) to help the two organizations hire professional staff, institute new programs and events, and build their memberships and donor bases.

UMD has grown into an influential voice in the U.S. and globally, representing the interests of Macedonians worldwide. Similarly, TCA's support to ACBH has allowed the organization to grow its presence in Washington, DC, and it has made it possible for young Bosnian Americans to intern in high profile offices in Washington, DC.

In 2016, TCA provided a \$5,000 grant to ACBH to support an ACBH delegation visit from Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to the United States. The delegation, which visited Washington, DC April 18-24, 2016, was comprised of Munira Subasic, President of the [Mother's Action of the Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves](#); Murat Tahirovic, President of the [Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide](#); and Elmina Kulasic, Senior Advisor at the Association of Victims and Witnesses of Genocide.

While in Washington, the delegation met with members of Congress, State Department officials, the U.S. Helsinki Commission, the U.S. Institute of Peace, TCA representatives, and other policymakers. They discussed the importance of the human rights situation in BiH, the denial of crimes committed during the war in BiH, and the completion of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia at The

Building Bridges

Hague. They also spoke about the importance of BiH for regional stability and cooperation. Subasic served as the keynote speaker at Bosnian Women's Day on Capitol Hill on April 21, 2016. Finally, during the visit ACBH hosted a screening of a documentary film dealing with sexual violence that was produced by the two associations represented on the delegation.

For the second year in a row, TCA also co-sponsored a reception on Capitol Hill in honor of June's Immigrant Heritage Month. The program featured key leaders of immigration reform and honored several members of Congress including Sen Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Reps. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ/9th) and Brendan Boyle (D-PA/13th).

Both UMD and ACBH share offices at TCA's headquarters in Washington, DC. This close proximity allows for the organizations to continue to host joint programs and foster the partnership spirit that Turkish, Macedonian, and Bosnian Americans have developed over the years.

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2017 will mark a decade of the UMD partnership with TCA and ACBH – strong and working together to shape a more constructive and open U.S. foreign policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Turkey.”

-Metodija A. Koloski, Co-Founder and President, United Macedonian Diaspora

“

ACBH is grateful to TCA for its many years of partnership and friendship - from providing ACBH with a matching grant that helped ensure that Bosnia and Herzegovina stays united, democratic and multi-ethnic to helping eradicate minefields during the 2014 floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina. ACBH looks forward to continuing our work with TCA in promoting democratic values and principles and advocating on behalf of our respective communities”

-Ajla Delkic, Executive Director, Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina

CELEBRATE
IMMIGRANT
HERITAGE
MONTH
06.2016

Building Bridges

TCA – Native American Relations



Congressman Tom Cole (R-OK/4th, right), Co-Chair of the Native American Caucus, and TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy

The Turkish and Native American partnership began in 2008 with TCA's [Study Abroad in Turkey scholarships for Native American students](#) and has been strengthened over the years as a result of several special economic and cultural projects spearheaded by TCA. TCA's Native American outreach aims to foster ties between Indian Country, Turkish Americans, and Turkey.

As part of this outreach in 2016, TCA hosted a Native American and Turkish Contemporary Art Exhibition on Capitol Hill in honor of Native American Heritage Month on November 15, 2016. The exhibition featured 10 Turkish and Native American contemporary paintings, which were presented in collaboration with the [Institute of American Indian Arts](#) in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the [Art in Embassies Program](#) of the U.S. Department of State, and the Turkish modern art collection provided by Turkish American business and collector Ekmel Anda from New Jersey.

Several members of Congress were in attendance including Native American Caucus

Co-Chair Tom Cole (R-OK/4th) and Reps. Andre Carson (D-IN/7th), Al Green (D-TX/9th), Scott Perry (R-PA/4th), and Don Young (R-AK/AL). Congressional staff, officials from both the State Department and the Turkish Embassy, and members of the Native American and Turkish American communities also attended as well as former Chief of the General Staff of Turkey General Ilker Basbug, who was on a lecture tour in the U.S.

In February 2016, TCA also helped arrange the first visit to Washington DC, of the newly elected Chukchansi Tribal Council and its Chairwoman Claudia Gonzales. TCA facilitated a meeting between the delegation and Speaker of the U.S. House of Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI/1st) and Congressman Alex Mooney (R-WV/2nd), who introduced a bill promoting a Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Turkey during the 114th Congress (2015-2016). The Chukchansi delegation also met with Turkish Ambassador to the U.S. Serdar Kilic to discuss business opportunities between the Chukchansi Tribe and Turkish companies.

Building Bridges



Chukchansi Chairwoman Claudia Gonzales (fourth from left) and the Chukchansi Tribal Council with TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy (fourth from right) and TCA Project Coordinators Sezan McDaniel and Liz Clark



Former Chief of the General Staff of Turkey General Ilker Basbug (third from right) with TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy (left) and members of the Turkish American community from the Washington DC Metropolitan Area

Building Bridges

TCA Syrian Refugee Campaign



Children in refugee camps outside of Izmir, Turkey who received knitted products from families through ReVi's knitting program

TCA donated \$100,000 in humanitarian grants to Syrian refugees in Turkey as part of its Syrian Refugee Matching Campaign. This campaign launched in the summer of 2016 in an effort to provide aid to the nearly 3 million refugees living in Turkey. Generous donations were also made to the campaign by the Turkish American community and friends of Turkey. Humanitarian grants were given to fund specific project requests from local organizations who work directly with refugees living outside of refugee camps in Turkey, including [Refugee Volunteers of Izmir](#) (ReVi), [Butun Cocuklar Bizim Dernegi](#) (All Children Are Ours Foundation), and [Sureli Destek](#) (Periodic Support).

With the TCA grant, Butun Cocuklar Bizim Dernegi and Sureli Destek provided winter clothing and boots to over 1,000 children in Batman and the Fatih, Okmeydani, and Kucukcekmece districts of Istanbul. In addition,

they provided refugee families with food, hygiene products, school supplies, heating supplies, and transportation support to refugee families. Sureli Destek continued providing aid to families for five months with TCA's grant.

ReVi used the humanitarian grant from TCA to support 400 families living in the Basmane, Kadifekale, and Ikicesmelik districts of Izmir. They opened two schools that serve over 120 children, ages 5-12, and supported teacher salaries, rent, school supplies, food and hygiene products, materials for bracelets and knitted products, and remuneration for families involved in ReVi's bracelet making and knitting program. TCA's grant allowed ReVi to continue operations for four months.

Building Bridges



Children work on art projects at ReVi's school in Izmir, Turkey



Refugee children in Mardin, Turkey receive boots for the winter

In the Community

Since its founding, TCA has supported Turkish American organizations in an effort to strengthen the Turkish American voice through education and civic participation.

Supporting Community Growth and Civic Contribution



Recipients of the TCA Grant Awards for Outstanding Turkish American Organizations with TCA staff at the Gala and Awards Ceremony during ATAA's 36th Annual National Leadership Conference in Washington, DC on February 27, 2016

In 2016, TCA continued to support the Turkish American community by providing incentives to Turkish American organizations to enhance their local presence and participation in national community activism. TCA presented grant awards of \$5,000 each for three outstanding component associations of the [Assembly of Turkish American Associations \(ATAA\)](#) at the Annual Gala and Awards Ceremony of ATAA's 36th National Leadership Conference, which took place in Washington, DC from February 25 - 27, 2016. The awards were given to the [American Turkish Association of North Carolina \(ATA-NC\)](#), [Association of Turkish Americans of Southern California \(ATASC\)](#), and the [American Turkish Association of Washington DC \(ATA-DC\)](#) to promote and recognize excellence in grassroots organization, engagement with the Turkish American community, and outreach to elected officials in the United States. Hundreds of Turkish Americans from across the United States participated in the conference, which also included a presentation at TCA



TCA representatives Kate Costello (left), Louette Ragusa (center), and Sezan McDaniel (right) at TCA's Turkish Festival booth in Washington, DC

In the Community



(Left to right) Ambassador (ret.) Francis Ricciardone, Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY/1st), Maryland Delegate Kris Valderrama, U.S. Consul General Jennifer Davis, TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy, and Turkish Embassy Spokesman Aydan Karamanoglu

headquarters on the Congressional Turkey Caucus and a discussion on the importance of grassroots political activism with former members of Congress Jim Moran (D-VA, 1991-2014) and Mike Ferguson (R-NJ, 2001-2009).

TCA also lent support and expertise to other groups in 2016. TCA briefed a delegation of students from the American Studies Program at Bahcesehir University in Istanbul on the American political system during the group's annual trip to the U.S. and arranged for the students to tour of the U.S. Capitol and meet with members of Congress and their staff. TCA was also a corporate sponsor of the American Turkish Association of Washington, DC (ATA-DC). As a result of the sponsorship, TCA participated in Turkish Heritage month activities in September, including Turkish Restaurant Week and the Washington, DC Turkish Festival, which took place on September 26, 2016.

On July 29, 2016, TCA hosted a reception in honor of the new U.S. Consul General to Istanbul Jennifer Davis and her husband Nick Davis. The reception introduced them to members of the Turkish American community and officials working on Turkish issues in Washington, DC, including Turkey Caucus Co-Chair Congressman Ed Whitfield (R-KY/1st), former Member of Congress Jim Moran (D-VA, 1991-2014), former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Francis Ricciardone, members of the Maryland House of Delegates Dan Morhaim (D/11th) and Kris Valderrama (D/26th), former U.S. diplomats who had served in Turkey, representatives from think tanks and Turkish American organizations, and members and friends of the Turkish American community.

Turkish American Legal Defense Fund

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

France's Highest Court Upholds Law Criminalizing Holocaust Denial

In 2016, the French Constitutional Council, France's Highest Court, upheld the Gayssot Act, a law criminalizing Holocaust denial, and rejected claims that Holocaust denial is protected free speech. Allying themselves with a known Holocaust denier, French Armenian groups had joined a challenge to the law, maintaining that since the French Court had previously ruled that questioning the Armenian allegation of genocide was a proper exercise of free speech, so should be questioning the Holocaust. In the alternative, the Armenian groups argued that the Holocaust and the alleged Armenian genocide were historical equivalents and therefore denial of both ought to be criminalized.

The French Constitutional Council disagreed with the Armenian groups on both counts. The Court emphasized that since international law had established the Holocaust as a genocide, its denial can be punished. This is in stark contrast to the Armenian allegation, which has never been upheld by a court of law.

The Court enunciated a sensible rule: that an event cannot be considered a genocide unless it is established as such by a court of law and that parliaments or governments cannot declare an event a genocide. This is in keeping with the United Nations Genocide Convention, which renders all accusations of genocide subject to a thorough trial of the evidence before a neutral judicial body.

The Association for Objectivity in Teaching Turkish History, a French Turkish organization, had joined the case on the side of upholding the Gayssot Act. TCA's [Turkish American Legal Defense Fund](#) supported the Turkish French representation in the case through legal and financial support. Welcoming the Court's decision, the organization expressed newfound hope in being able to freely discuss and debate late-Ottoman history without being accused of genocide denial.

In Congress

A significant component of TCA's mission is to enhance understanding of the importance of U.S.-Turkey relations in the United States Congress.

Strengthening the Voice of Turkish Americans

TCA has made it a primary objective to strengthen the voice of Turkish Americans in public affairs. TCA works to monitor legislation and issues discussed in Congress that concern the Turkish American community. TCA also regularly provides information and analysis to

members of Congress and their staff on issues related to Turkey and U.S.-Turkey relations through TCA issue papers sent via fax and email bulletins as well as through face-to-face meetings. In 2016, TCA published 29 TCA issue papers.

Supporting the Turkey Caucus

Throughout the year, TCA works with the Turkish American community to increase the membership of the [Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations and Turkish Americans](#) (the Turkey Caucus). In 2016, the Turkey Caucus reached a record 160 members, representing 43 U.S. states and all six territories. With members from both U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, it was among the three largest bicameral ethnic/national caucuses in Congress.

TCA engaged members of the Turkey Caucus on several occasions throughout the year. It sponsored numerous events relating to the mission of the Turkey Caucus, including facilitating the participation of Turkey Caucus members in Turkish American events, hosting meetings with members of the Turkish American community, promoting the work of its individual members, and integrating such TCA programs as its scholarship program and Washington Summer Internship Program into the members' own constituent services.



TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy with Rep. Andre Carson (D-IN/7th)

In Congress



TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy and Project Coordinators Liz Clark and Sezan McDaniel present the Hon. Ed Whitfield (Former Member of Congress 1995-2016, R-KY) with a traditional tavla (Turkish backgammon) set to commemorate his contributions to the Turkish American community while in Congress

On October 21, 2016 TCA hosted a reception for the Hon. Ed Whitfield (R-KY, 1995-2016) upon his retirement from Congress for his contributions to the Turkish American community and the U.S.-Turkey relationship. As co-founder and former co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations and Turkish Americans, he was an ardent supporter of the U.S.-Turkey relationship and a voice on Capitol Hill for Turkish Americans. Members and friends of the Turkish American community attended the reception along with a delegation of Turkish women politicians.



TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy with Rep. Brenda Lawrence (D-MI/14th)

Strengthening U.S. – Turkey Relations

TCA is committed to fostering friendship, understanding, and cooperation between the United States and Turkey.

Hosting Delegations and Visitors from Turkey

In an effort to promote goodwill and friendship between the U.S. and Turkey, TCA hosted delegations and visitors from academia, the government, and the public and private sectors in Turkey throughout 2016.

On March 30, TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy attended a gala dinner at the Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium in Washington, DC where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addressed the audience. The dinner was hosted by the [Turkey-U.S. Business Council](#) (TAIK) of the [Foreign Economic Relations Board of Turkey](#) (DEIK) in collaboration with the [Prime Ministry Investment Support and Promotion Agency of Turkey](#) (ISPAT). The following day, TCA hosted members of TAIK and DEIK for a discussion on TCA activities and programs as well as the upcoming U.S. elections. Among the delegation was CEO of Turkish Airlines Temel Kotil.

TCA also hosted a DEIK delegation led by President Omer Cihad Vardan on May 18, 2016. TCA arranged for the delegation to meet with Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee Ed Royce (R-CA/39th), Turkey Caucus Co-Chair Ed Whitfield (R-KY/1st), and Reps. Steve Chabot (R-OH/1st), Michael McCaul (R-TX/10th), and Bill Pascrell (R-NJ/9th). The delegation also met with congressional staff in the office of Representatives Robin Kelly (D-IL/2nd), Alex Mooney (R-WV/2nd), Bill Pascrell, and Pete Sessions (R-TX/32nd). At the meetings, they discussed expanding Turkish investment in the U.S., strengthening U.S.-Turkey economic ties, and the importance of maintaining a strong U.S.-Turkey relationship.

In May 2016, TCA hosted a roundtable discussion on Capitol Hill with Prof. Dr. Ahmet K. Han, Professor of International Relations at Kadir Has University. Dr. Han discussed the political environment in Turkey



TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy (fourth from left) with Turkish parliamentary delegation, Turkish Embassy Representative, Attorney David Saltzman (on the far right)

Strengthening U.S. – Turkey Relations

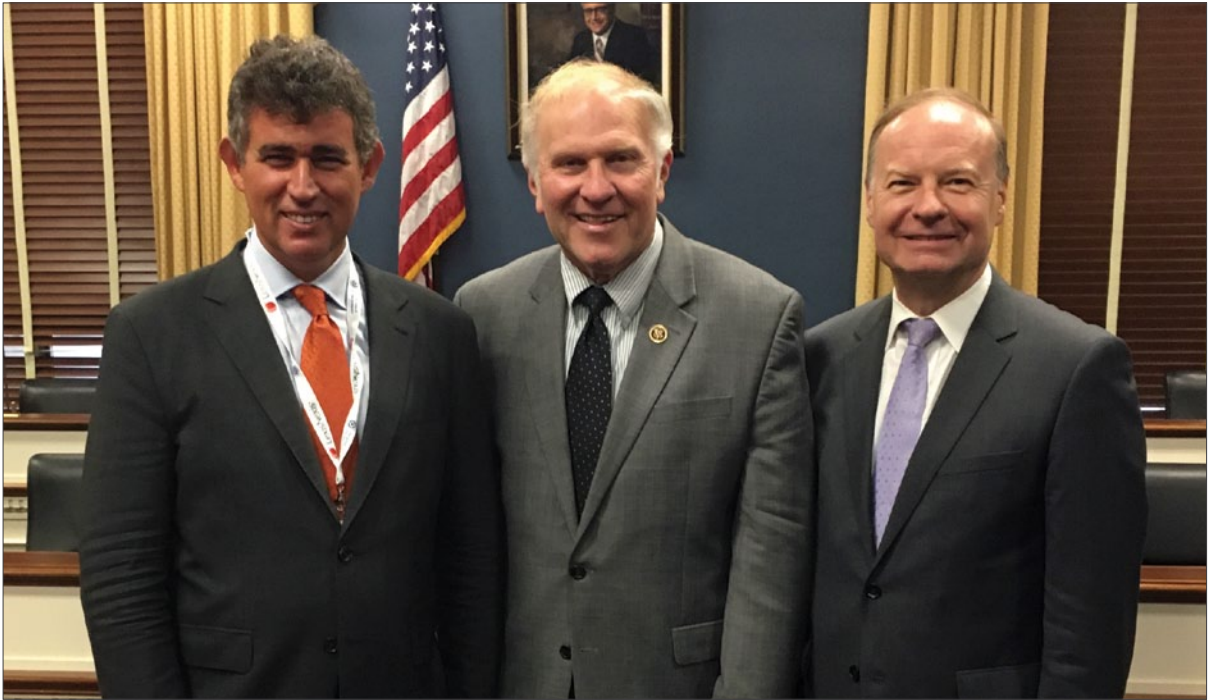


TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy (center) with Turkish Airlines CEO Temel Kotil (second from left) and Members of the Turkey-US Business Council (TAK) of the Foreign Relations Economic Board of Turkey (DEIK)



(Left to Right) Turkish American businessman Omer Er, Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH/1st), DEIK President Omer Cihad Vardan, Rep. Ed Whitfield (R-KY/1st), TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy, and Lydia Borland

Strengthening U.S. – Turkey Relations



(Left to Right) Union of Turkish Bar Associations President Metin Feyzioglu, Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH/1st), and TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy

and the importance of U.S.-Turkey relations with House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Turkey Caucus staffers. Attendees included staff from the offices of Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA/48th) and Turkey Caucus Co-Chairs Reps. Ed Whitfield (R-KY/1st) and Gerry Connolly (D-VA/11th).

On September 6, 2016, TCA hosted a delegation from the Turkish Grand National Assembly at its headquarters in Washington on September 6, 2016.

The delegation was led by Deputy Ravza Kavakci Kan and included Deputies Ali Sarikaya, Chairman of the U.S.-Turkey Friendship Group in Turkey's Parliament; Ahmet Berat Conkar; Prof. Dr. Emine Nur Gunay; and Sena Nur Celik. The delegation came to Washington to meet with members of Congress in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in Turkey, exchange ideas with U.S.-based NGOs, and strengthen the friendship between the U.S.

and Turkey. Members of the delegation made their first stop at TCA, where they discussed the Congressional Turkey Caucus and the importance of maintaining strong U.S.-Turkey relations.

On September 20-21, 2016, TCA hosted a delegation from the [Union of Turkish Bar Associations](#) (TBB). The delegation was led by President Metin Feyzioglu and included members Umit Herguner and Izzet Gunes Gurseler. TCA hosted a reception on Capitol Hill for the delegation, which was attended by Reps. Frank Guinta (R-NH/1st), Tom MacArthur (R-NJ/3rd), and Steve Chabot (R-OH/1st) as well as staff from several congressional offices.

Strengthening U.S. – Turkey Relations

Pre-Election Study Tour for Women Politicians



The Pre-Election Study Tour delegation at Mount Vernon

TCA led a Pre-Election Study Tour of Turkish women politicians to the U.S. prior to the 2016 U.S. elections. Sponsored by TCA and organized by the [U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress](#) (USAFMC), visited Washington, DC on October 19-22, 2016. The delegation consisted of ten Turkish women representing all four major political parties in Turkey and the Turkish non-profit KADER ([The Association for Supporting and Training Women Candidates](#)), which was chosen by TCA as a partner in the project. Delegates included five Parliamentarians from the Grand National Assembly of Turkey: Selina Dogan (CHP), Gamze Akkus Ilgezdi (CHP), Arzu Erdem (MHP), Filiz Kerestecioglu (HDP), and Meral Daniş Bestas (HDP); in addition to Zeynep Jane Louise Kandur, member of the AKP's Main Branch in Istanbul; Derya Taskin, President of the Turkish Institute for Progress (TIP); and three representatives from the non-profit organization KADER: Fatma Çigdem Aydin (Former KADER President), Sirin Mine Kilic (KADER Board Member), and Itir Bagdadi (Lecturer at Izmir University of Economics, International Relations and the European Union Department).

“

Our study trip was very fruitful in many ways. We had a chance to learn about the U.S. political system, which is very different from ours. Meeting with journalists, listening to their insights, having conversations with Representatives and their advisers, and understanding their way of work was very valuable. Thank you for this unique experience and for the great hospitality of the TCA team.”

-Fatma Cigdem Aydin, former KADER President, Pre-Election Study Tour Delegate

Strengthening U.S. – Turkey Relations

The delegation came to Washington to learn more about the U.S. election process including presidential, congressional, state, and local races as well as the potential impact of the 2016 U.S. election on the U.S.-Turkey relationship. Participants attended several high-level meetings and briefings where they heard various perspectives on the U.S. election and discussed the future direction of U.S. policy domestically and abroad as well as the social and political climate and mood in America. They met with several former members of Congress including Martin Frost (D-TX, 1979-2005), Cliff Stearns (R-FL, 1989-2013; President, USAFMC), Albert Wynn (D-MD, 1993-2008), and Dennis Hertel (D-MI, 1981-1993); as well as chiefs of staff from the offices of Reps. Alcee Hastings (D-FL/20th), Jim Langevin (D-RI/2nd), Susan Brooks (R-IN/5th), Michael Burgess (R-TX/26th), and Tom Cole (R-OK/4th); journalists from Bloomberg, The Hill, and RealClearPolitics; Turkish Embassy officials; and think tank experts on U.S.-Turkey relations. They also attended a reception and dinner in honor of former member of Congress

Ed Whitfield (R-KY, 1995-2016), a co-founder of the Congressional Caucus on U.S.-Turkey Relations and Turkish Americans, following his retirement from Congress. Finally, delegates toured the U.S. Capitol and visited Mount Vernon, the residence and burial place for the first president of the United States George Washington.



Pre-Election Study Tour Delegates have lunch at the Turkish Ambassador's residence in Washington, DC



Female Congressional Chiefs of Staff address the Pre-Election Study Tour Delegation in the U.S. Capitol Building

Strengthening U.S. – Turkey Relations



Pre-Election Study Tour delegates with TCA President G. Lincoln McCurdy (center) and the TCA team



Pre-Election Study Tour Delegates with the Hon. Ed Whitfield (Former Member of Congress 1995-2016, R-KY)

Support TCA

The Turkish Coalition of America is a U.S. tax exempt public charitable organization and your contributions are U.S. tax deductible. TCA is supported entirely by private donations. Checks can be mailed to: Turkish Coalition of America, 1510 H St. NW Suite 900, Washington, DC 20005.

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