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## *House of Representatives*

Mr. Speaker, as President of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Parliamentary Assembly and co-Chairman of the Congressional Romania Caucus, I congratulate Romania on its Great Union Day, celebrating the anniversary of its unification on December 1, 1918, and its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence following the fall of communism.

Romania is a stalwart U.S. and NATO ally and has worked closely to confront a host of global challenges, including our joint efforts to bolster regional defense, halt nuclear proliferation, and increase energy security. For example, the Permanent Forward Operating Site at Mihail Kogalniceanu Air Base not only enables a vital U.S. forward presence in the region, but also provides essential opportunities for joint training with NATO allies. With the signing of the U.S.-Romania Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement in September 2011, Romania established itself as a key strategic partner in NATO's emerging missile defense capabilities effort. The Missile Defense Interceptor site at Deveselu Air Base, near the Bulgarian border, will provide missile defense protection to our allies in Europe and the Middle East.

Tragically, ongoing events in Ukraine are unsettling the region and testing the transatlantic alliance. As you know, Russia seeks to once again destabilize much of Eastern Europe and restore influence over territories lost following the collapse of the Soviet Union. That is why it is critically important for the United States, Romania, and other European allies to continue to work together to strengthen the transatlantic alliance and bolster regional security.

The strategic partnership between the United States and Romania has greatly advanced our common interests in promoting transatlantic and regional security, free market opportunities, and should continue to foster greater economic and cultural exchanges, trade and investment, and social contacts.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in celebrating Romania's Great Union Day and its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence since the fall of communism.

Michael R. Turner

Member of Congress