



**Ambassador Eleni Kounalakis** was sworn in as the 50th Lieutenant Governor of California by Governor Gavin Newsom on January 7th, 2019. She is the first woman elected Lt. Governor of California. A native Californian, she visited each of the state’s 58 counties during her historic campaign.

From 2010 to 2013, Kounalakis served as President Barack Obama’s Ambassador to the Republic of Hungary. Kounalakis was the first Greek-American woman – and at age 43 one of America’s youngest – to serve as U.S. Ambassador. Her highly acclaimed memoir, “Madam Ambassador, Three Years of Diplomacy, Dinner Parties and Democracy in Budapest” (The New Press, 2015), chronicles the onset of Hungary’s democratic backsliding.

Governor Jerry Brown appointed Kounalakis to chair the California Advisory Council for International Trade and Investment in 2014. Kounalakis was a Virtual Fellow at the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) between 2014 and 2017, specializing in international trade and immigration. She is currently a director of the Association of American Ambassadors and a National Democratic Institute (NDI) “Ambassadors Circle” advisor.

Prior to her public service, Kounalakis was president of one of California’s most respected housing development firms, AKT Development, where she worked for 18 years. She built master-planned communities and delivered quality housing to the Sacramento region’s working families – recognizing her as one of the capital region’s most prominent businesswomen. Passionate about early childhood development, Kounalakis served as a member of California’s First 5 Commission and the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism.

Eleni Kounalakis graduated from Dartmouth College in 1989 and earned her Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from U.C. Berkeley’s Haas School of Business in 1992. She holds an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the American College of Greece. She is married to Dr. Markos Kounalakis and the couple has two teenage sons, Neo and Eon.