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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul, Turkey, is the Sacred See that presides in a spirit of brotherhood over a communion of self-governing churches of the Orthodox Christian world; and

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WHEREAS, The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the 269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and holds titular primacy as primus inter pares, meaning "first among equals," in the community of Orthodox churches world-wide; and

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WHEREAS, In 1994, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, along with leaders of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, cosponsored the Conference on Peace and Tolerance, which brought together Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders for an interfaith dialogue to help end the Balkan conflict and the ethnic conflict in the Caucasus region; and

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WHEREAS, In 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold Medal; and

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WHEREAS, Following the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered

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1 a group of international religious leaders to produce the first
2 joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned the 9/11
3 attacks as "antireligious"; and

4 WHEREAS, In October 2005, the Ecumenical Patriarch, along
5 with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the
6 Conference on Peace and Tolerance II to further promote peace
7 and stability in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus region, and
8 Central Asia via religious leaders' interfaith dialogue,
9 understanding, and action; and

10 WHEREAS, The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for
11 nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300,000,000 members
12 world-wide with more than 2,000,000 members in the United
13 States; and

14 WHEREAS, Since 1453, the continuing presence of the
15 Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament
16 to the religious coexistence of Christians and Muslims; and

17 WHEREAS, This religious coexistence is in jeopardy because
18 the Ecumenical Patriarchate is considered a minority religion
19 by the Turkish government; and

20 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the
21 candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch

1 to only Turkish nationals, and from the millions of Orthodox
2 Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century and
3 due to the continued policies during this period by the Turkish
4 government, there remain less than 3,000 of the Ecumenical
5 Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and

6 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey closed the Theological
7 School on the island of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow
8 it to reopen, thus impeding training for Orthodox Christian
9 clergy; and

10 WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94%
11 of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed a
12 42% tax, retroactive to 1999, on the Baloukli Hospital and Home
13 for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical
14 Patriarchate; and

15 WHEREAS, The European Union, a group of nations with a
16 common goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its
17 peoples, began accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3,
18 2005; and

19 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria
20 for accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993,
21 obligating candidate countries to achieve certain levels of
22 reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing

1 democracy, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for and
2 protection of minorities and human rights; and

3 WHEREAS, The Turkish government's current treatment of the
4 Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership
5 conditions and goals of the European Union; and

6 WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this State and throughout
7 the United States stand to lose their spiritual leader because
8 of the continued actions of the Turkish government; and

9 WHEREAS, The Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the
10 Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each
11 have been honored with a patriarchal title, or "offikion", by
12 the Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding service to the
13 Orthodox Church, will send an American delegation to Turkey to
14 meet with Turkish government officials, as well as the United
15 States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, regarding the
16 Turkish government's treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;
17 therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL
19 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we urge the Government
20 of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights
21 without compromise, cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical
22 Patriarchate, grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate appropriate

1 international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, the right
2 to train clergy of all nationalities, and to respect the
3 property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical
4 Patriarchate; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
6 delivered to the President of the United States, the United
7 States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassador of
8 the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and to the members
9 of the Illinois Congressional Delegation.