

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

House Resolution

No. 876 Session of 2006

Session of 2006

INTRODUCED BY SOLOBAY, DeWEESE, BEBKO-JONES, CALTAGIRONE, COHEN, CRAHALLA, FLAHERTY, GEORGE, GOODMAN, GRUCELA, HERSHEY, HICKERNELL, MANN, PALLONE, PISTELLA, REICHLEY, ROBERTS, TIGUE AND YOUNGBLOOD, OCTOBER 3, 2006

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
OCTOBER 3, 2006

A Resolution

- 1 Urging the Government of Turkey to cease its discrimination of
- 2 the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to grant the Ecumenical
- 3 Patriarch appropriate international recognition,
- 4 ecclesiastical succession and the right to train clergy of
- 5 all nationalities, and to respect the property rights and
- 6 human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.
- 7 WHEREAS, The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul,
- 8 Turkey, is the sacred See that presides in a spirit of
- 9 brotherhood over a communion of the self-governing churches of
- 10 the Orthodox Christian world; and
- 11 WHEREAS, The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,
- 12 who is the 269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and
- 13 holds titular primacy as primus inter pares, meaning "first
- 14 among equals" in the community of Orthodox churches worldwide;
- 15 and
- 16 WHEREAS, In 1994 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, along with
- 17 leaders of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, cosponsored the
- 18 Conference on Peace and Tolerance, which brought together
- 1 Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders for an interfaith
- 2 dialogue to help end the Balkan conflict and the ethnic conflict
- 3 in the Caucasus region; and
- 4 WHEREAS, In 1997 the Congress of the United States awarded
- 5 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold
- 6 Medal; and
- 7 WHEREAS, Following the terrorist attacks on our nation on
- 8 September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a
- 9 group of international religious leaders to produce the first
- 10 joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned the 9/11
- 11 attacks as "anti-religious"; and
- 12 WHEREAS, In October 2005 the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with
- 13 Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the Conference
- 14 on Peace and Tolerance II to further promote peace and stability
- 15 in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus region and Central Asia via
- 16 religious leaders' interfaith dialogue, understanding and
- 17 action; and
- 18 WHEREAS, The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for
- 19 nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members
- 20 worldwide with more than 2 million members in the United States;
- 21 and
- 22 WHEREAS, Since 1453 the continuing presence of the Ecumenical
- 23 Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament to the
- 24 religious coexistence of Christians and Muslims; and
- 25 WHEREAS, This religious coexistence is in jeopardy because
- 26 the Government of Turkey refuses to recognize the rights and
- 27 religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is
- 28 considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and
- 29 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates
- 30 available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only

- 1 Turkish nationals, and from the millions of Orthodox Christians
- 2 living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century, and due to the
- 3 continued policies of minority discrimination during this period
- 4 by the Turkish government, there remain less than 3,000 of the

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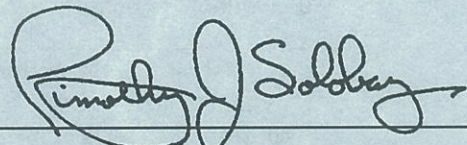
5 Ecumenical Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and
 6 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has reneged on its
 7 agreement to reopen the Theological School on the island of
 8 Halki, which the Turkish government closed in 1971, thus
 9 impeding training for Orthodox Christian clergy; and
 10 WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94% of
 11 the properties of the Ecumenical Patriarchate 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 common
 16 goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples, began
 17 accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005; and
 18 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for
 19 accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating
 20 candidate countries to achieve certain levels of reform,
 21 including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy,
 22 adherence to the rule of law and respect for and protection of
 23 minorities and human rights; and
 24 WHEREAS, The Turkish government's current treatment of the
 25 Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership
 26 conditions and goals of the European Union; and
 27 WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this Commonwealth and
 28 throughout the United States stand to lose their spiritual
 29 leader because of the continued actions of the Turkish
 30 government; and

1 WHEREAS, In November 2006 the Archons of the Ecumenical
 2 Patriarchate of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of
 3 laymen who each have been honored with a Patriarchal title, or
 4 "offikion," by the Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding
 5 service to the Orthodox Church, will send an American delegation
 6 to Turkey to meet with Turkish government officials, as well as
 7 the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey,
 8 regarding the Turkish government's treatment of the Ecumenical
 9 Patriarchate; therefore be it

10 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the
 11 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania urge the Government of Turkey to do
 12 all of the following:

- 13 (1) Uphold and safeguard religious and human rights
 14 without compromise.
- 15 (2) Cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical
 16 Patriarchate.
- 17 (3) Grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate
 18 international recognition, ecclesiastic succession and the
 19 right to train clergy of all nationalities.
- 20 (4) Respect the property rights and human rights of the
 21 Ecumenical Patriarchate;
- 22 and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to
 24 the President of the United States, to the United States
 25 Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, to the Ambassador of the
 26 Republic of Turkey to the United States and to the Pennsylvania
 27 Congressional Delegation.



TIMOTHY J. SOLOBAY

State Representative, 48th Legislative District