

State of West Virginia

Legislative Resolution



HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 37

[Adopted by the Legislature, March 8, 2008]

[By Delegates Cann, Fragale, Iaquina, Miley, Andes, Azinger, Beach, Browning, Campbell, Cowles, Craig, Crosier, Eldridge, Ellis, Frederick, Hartman, Higgins, Hrutkay, Kessler, Kominar, Long, Longstreth, Mahan, Manchin, Michael, C. Miller, Palumbo, Paxton, Pino, Porter, Reynolds, Rodighiero, Rowan, Shaver, Shook, Stalnaker, Stemple, Stephens, Swartzmiller, Tabb, Varner, Williams and Yost]

“Urging the Government of Turkey to cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, to grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, allow ecclesiastical succession and the right to train clergy of all nationalities, and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.”

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

WHEREAS, The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the 269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and hold titular primacy as *primus inter pares*, meaning “first among equals” in the community of Orthodox churches worldwide; and

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

WHEREAS, Following the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a group of international religious leaders to produce the first joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned the 9/11 attacks as “anti-religious”; and

WHEREAS, In October 2005 the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the Conference on Peace and Tolerance II to further promote peace and stability in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus region and central Asia via religious leaders’ interfaith dialogue, understanding and action; and

WHEREAS, The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members worldwide with more than 2 million members in the United States; and

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

WHEREAS, This religious coexistence is in jeopardy because the Government of Turkey refuses to recognize the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarchate to only Turkish nationals at the turn of the 20th century, and due to the continued policies of minority discrimination during this period by the Turkish government, there remain less than 3,000 of the Ecumenical Patriarchs flock left in Turkey today; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has reneged on its agreement to reopen the Theological School on the island of Halki, which the Turkish government closed in 1971, thus impeding training for Orthodox Christian clergy; and

WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94 percent of the properties of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and has placed a 42 percent tax retroactive to 1999 on the Baloukli Hospital and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

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

WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to achieve certain levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, adherence to the rule of law and respect for and protection of minorities and human rights; and

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

WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in the State of West Virginia and throughout the United States stand to lose their spiritual leader because of the continued actions of the Turkish government; therefore, be it

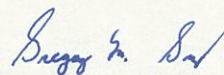
Resolved by the Legislature of West Virginia:

The State of West Virginia urges the Government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise; cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession and the right to train clergy of all nationalities; and respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and, be it

Further Resolved, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates forward certified copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, to the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, to the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and to Angelo Koukoulis.



I, GREGORY M. GRAY, Clerk of the House of Delegates, and as such Clerk, Keeper of the Rolls of the Legislature of West Virginia, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of House Concurrent Resolution 37, which was adopted by the Legislature on the 8th day of March, 2008.



Gregory M. Gray
Clerk of the House of Delegates

March 8, 2008