

1 community of Turkish citizens of the Orthodox faith has declined to
2 only approximately 2,500 persons, most of whom are elderly; and

3 WHEREAS, Before its closure, the Theological School of Halki
4 was the only educational institution for Orthodox Christianity in
5 Turkey; the school was closed in 1971 by Turkish authorities under a
6 law requiring that higher education in religion and minority
7 training be controlled by the state; and

8 WHEREAS, The United States Congress passed a resolution
9 expressing its sentiment that the Orthodox Theological School of
10 Halki in the Republic of Turkey should be reopened in order to
11 promote religious freedom; and

12 WHEREAS, The government of Turkey has reneged on its
13 agreement to reopen the Theological School of Halki, thus impeding
14 training for Orthodox Christian clergy within its borders; and

15 WHEREAS, In recent years, the government of Turkey has, in
16 violation of the inalienable rights of all peoples, confiscated
17 more than 90 percent of the properties of the Ecumenical
18 Patriarchate and has placed a 42 percent tax, retroactive to 1999,
19 on the nonprofit Balukli hospital, which is run by the Ecumenical
20 Patriarchate; and

21 WHEREAS, The dissolution of the spiritual head of Orthodox
22 Christian Churches in the coming decades is inevitable if Turkey
23 continues its policy of interference in religious matters, despite
24 the government's stated policy of being purely secular in its
25 dealings; and

26 WHEREAS, All Christians in our state, in the United States,
27 and around the world stand to lose this nearly 2,000-year-old

1 Sacred See, where the text of the New Testament was codified, the
2 canonical structure of the Christian church was established, and
3 the Nicene Creed was written and first pronounced; the
4 disappearance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate would mean the loss of
5 a crucial link between Christians and their religious history,
6 sacred texts, and religious forebears; and

7 WHEREAS, The disappearance of this See would also mean the
8 end of a crucial link between Christians and the Muslim world; at a
9 time when individuals hostile to the United States are attempting
10 to create conflict between Christians and Muslims, the continuing
11 presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey is a powerful
12 testament to the coexistence of these two faiths in Istanbul since
13 1453; and

14 WHEREAS, Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
15 on America, the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians, Ecumenical
16 Patriarch Bartholomew, gathered international religious leaders
17 and produced the first statement signed by Muslim leaders that
18 condemned the attacks as "anti-religious"; and

19 WHEREAS, The importance of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
20 to the United States is reflected in the record number of
21 Congressional cosponsors of the measure that bestowed on him
22 America's highest civilian award, the Congressional Gold Medal of
23 Honor--an award also given to George Washington, Winston Churchill,
24 Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and Pope John Paul II; and

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

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

7 WHEREAS, The Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into effect in
8 1999, affirms that the European Union is founded on the principles
9 of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental
10 freedoms, and the rule of law; Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty
11 enables the European Council to take appropriate action to combat
12 discrimination based on religion or belief; and

13 WHEREAS, Turkey's current treatment of the Ecumenical
14 Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and
15 goals of the European Union; and

16 WHEREAS, The United States has long been a beacon of hope for
17 vulnerable and disenfranchised people around the world, and the
18 State of Texas has long valued and defended the principles of
19 democracy, individual liberty, freedom of speech, and freedom of
20 religion; as citizens of conscience of this great land, we bear both
21 the responsibility and the honor to raise our voices against
22 injustice in behalf of those unable to speak for themselves; now,
23 therefore, be it

24 RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas
25 hereby express its support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and urge
26 the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, as
27 leaders of the international community, to encourage the government

1 of Turkey to cease its discrimination against one of the oldest
2 institutions in Christianity, the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and, be
3 it further

4 RESOLVED, That the State of Texas call on the government of
5 Turkey to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religion
6 and to immediately grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate appropriate
7 international recognition, the right to determine ecclesiastic
8 succession, and the right to train clergy of all nationalities;
9 and, be it further

10 RESOLVED, That the State of Texas call on the government of
11 Turkey to pledge to uphold and safeguard religious rights without
12 compromise; and, be it further

13 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official
14 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to
15 the United States ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, to the
16 ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, to the
17 presidents of the commission, parliament, and Council of the
18 European Union, to the secretary general of the United Nations, to
19 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the
20 senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the
21 Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution
22 be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to
23 the Congress of the United States of America.