

1-1 By: Huffman S.C.R. No. 70
1-2 (In the Senate - Filed May 4, 2009; May 4, 2009, read first
1-3 time and referred to Committee on State Affairs; May 15, 2009,
1-4 reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 9, Nays 0;
1-5 May 15, 2009, sent to printer.)

1-6 SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1-7 WHEREAS, The Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in modern-day
1-8 Istanbul, formerly known as Constantinople, in the Republic of
1-9 Turkey, is the Sacred See that presides over a community of
1-10 self-governing churches of the Orthodox Christian world; and

1-11 WHEREAS, The See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,
1-12 who is the 269th direct successor of the Apostle Andrew and who
1-13 holds titular primacy as *primus inter pares*, "first among equals,"
1-14 in the community of Orthodox Churches worldwide; the Orthodox
1-15 Church has been in existence for nearly 2,000 years and numbers
1-16 approximately 300 million members around the world, with more than
1-17 two million members in the United States; and

1-18 WHEREAS, The government of Turkey refuses to recognize the
1-19 international status and the rights and religious freedoms of the
1-20 Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the Greek Orthodox Christian
1-21 Church, which is a minority religion in Turkey; and

1-22 WHEREAS, The government of Turkey and Turkish prime ministers
1-23 have limited the candidates available to the Holy Synod for
1-24 selection as the Ecumenical Patriarch to Turkish nationals who have
1-25 performed mandatory military service in the Turkish armed forces,
1-26 and they continue to insist that any new spiritual head of Orthodox
1-27 Christians, including Orthodox Christians in Texas and throughout
1-28 the United States, be approved by them; because of selective
1-29 enforcement of laws and regulations, the once large eligible
1-30 community of Turkish citizens of the Orthodox faith has declined to
1-31 only approximately 2,500 persons, most of whom are elderly; and

1-32 WHEREAS, Before its closure, the Theological School of Halki
1-33 was the only educational institution for Orthodox Christianity in
1-34 Turkey; the school was closed in 1971 by Turkish authorities under a
1-35 law requiring that higher education in religion and minority
1-36 training be controlled by the state; and

1-37 WHEREAS, The United States Congress passed a resolution
1-38 expressing its sentiment that the Orthodox Theological School of
1-39 Halki in the Republic of Turkey should be reopened in order to
1-40 promote religious freedom; and

1-41 WHEREAS, The government of Turkey has reneged on its
1-42 agreement to reopen the Theological School of Halki, thus impeding
1-43 training for Orthodox Christian clergy within its borders; and

1-44 WHEREAS, In recent years, the government of Turkey has, in
1-45 violation of the inalienable rights of all peoples, confiscated
1-46 more than 90 percent of the properties of the Ecumenical
1-47 Patriarchate and has placed a 42 percent tax, retroactive to 1999,
1-48 on the nonprofit Balukli hospital, which is run by the Ecumenical
1-49 Patriarchate; and

1-50 WHEREAS, The dissolution of the spiritual head of Orthodox
1-51 Christian Churches in the coming decades is inevitable if Turkey
1-52 continues its policy of interference in religious matters, despite
1-53 the government's stated policy of being purely secular in its
1-54 dealings; and

1-55 WHEREAS, All Christians in our state, in the United States,
1-56 and around the world stand to lose this nearly 2,000-year-old
1-57 Sacred See, where the text of the New Testament was codified, the
1-58 canonical structure of the Christian church was established, and
1-59 the Nicene Creed was written and first pronounced; the
1-60 disappearance of the Ecumenical Patriarchate would mean the loss of
1-61 a crucial link between Christians and their religious history,
1-62 sacred texts, and religious forebears; and

1-63 WHEREAS, The disappearance of this See would also mean the
1-64 end of a crucial link between Christians and the Muslim world; at a
1-65 time when individuals hostile to the United States are attempting

2-1 to create conflict between Christians and Muslims, the continuing
 2-2 presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey is a powerful
 2-3 testament to the coexistence of these two faiths in Istanbul since
 2-4 1453; and

2-5 WHEREAS, Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks
 2-6 on America, the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians, Ecumenical
 2-7 Patriarch Bartholomew, gathered international religious leaders
 2-8 and produced the first statement signed by Muslim leaders that
 2-9 condemned the attacks as "anti-religious"; and

2-10 WHEREAS, The importance of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
 2-11 to the United States is reflected in the record number of
 2-12 Congressional cosponsors of the measure that bestowed on him
 2-13 America's highest civilian award, the Congressional Gold Medal of
 2-14 Honor--an award also given to George Washington, Winston Churchill,
 2-15 Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and Pope John Paul II; and

2-16 WHEREAS, The European Union, a group of nations with a common
 2-17 goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples, began
 2-18 accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005; and

2-19 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria for
 2-20 accession to the European Union at the Copenhagen European Council
 2-21 in 1993, obligating candidate countries to have achieved certain
 2-22 levels of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing
 2-23 democracy, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for and
 2-24 protection of minorities and human rights; and

2-25 WHEREAS, The Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into effect in
 2-26 1999, affirms that the European Union is founded on the principles
 2-27 of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental
 2-28 freedoms, and the rule of law; Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty
 2-29 enables the European Council to take appropriate action to combat
 2-30 discrimination based on religion or belief; and

2-31 WHEREAS, Turkey's current treatment of the Ecumenical
 2-32 Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and
 2-33 goals of the European Union; and

2-34 WHEREAS, The United States has long been a beacon of hope for
 2-35 vulnerable and disenfranchised people around the world, and the
 2-36 State of Texas has long valued and defended the principles of
 2-37 democracy, individual liberty, freedom of speech, and freedom of
 2-38 religion; as citizens of conscience of this great land, we bear both
 2-39 the responsibility and the honor to raise our voices against
 2-40 injustice in behalf of those unable to speak for themselves; now,
 2-41 therefore, be it

2-42 RESOLVED, That the 81st Legislature of the State of Texas
 2-43 hereby express its support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and urge
 2-44 the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, as
 2-45 leaders of the international community, to encourage the government
 2-46 of Turkey to cease its discrimination against one of the oldest
 2-47 institutions in Christianity, the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and, be
 2-48 it further

2-49 RESOLVED, That the State of Texas call on the government of
 2-50 Turkey to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religion
 2-51 and to immediately grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate appropriate
 2-52 international recognition, the right to determine ecclesiastic
 2-53 succession, and the right to train clergy of all nationalities;
 2-54 and, be it further

2-55 RESOLVED, That the State of Texas call on the government of
 2-56 Turkey to pledge to uphold and safeguard religious rights without
 2-57 compromise; and, be it further

2-58 RESOLVED, That the Texas secretary of state forward official
 2-59 copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to
 2-60 the United States ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, to the
 2-61 ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, to the
 2-62 presidents of the commission, parliament, and Council of the
 2-63 European Union, to the secretary general of the United Nations, to
 2-64 the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the
 2-65 senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the
 2-66 Texas delegation to Congress with the request that this resolution
 2-67 be officially entered in the Congressional Record as a memorial to
 2-68 the Congress of the United States of America.

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