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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: (202) 225-5021
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May 11, 2007

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His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Prime Minister
Ankara
REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Millions of Orthodox Christians in the United States, and 250 million around the world, are facing the likely elimination of their nearly 2,000-year-old spiritual beacon, the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In our view, this lamentable situation is the result of certain inappropriate practices of the Turkish Government, particularly as they are implemented in an era when the population of Turkish citizens who are Greek Orthodox has shrunk to near-negligible numbers.

We are especially concerned about three aspects of Turkish Government policy toward its citizens who are Greek Orthodox – practices which threaten the viability of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in a direct and urgent manner. The first of these is your longstanding unwillingness to recognize the Ecumenical Patriarchate as ecumenical – that is, trans-national. As you surely know, the entire world outside of Turkey, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, recognizes the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul as the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Its Ecumenical nature derives from its history and spiritual stature as well as the faith and perceptions of people around the globe. We would hope that you would view the Ecumenical Patriarchate as part of the rich cultural tapestry of your magnificent, vibrant city.

Second, we are deeply concerned by your continued involvement in the process of selecting the Ecumenical Patriarch and by your continued insistence that he be a Turkish citizen. These practices clearly reflect your policy of viewing the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a strictly Turkish institution, when, in fact, it provides spiritual and moral guidance for millions of believers worldwide. Today there are less than 2,500 Greek

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Orthodox citizens of Turkey, most of whom are elderly. Accordingly, under present policies, there soon will be virtually no Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey left to qualify as Ecumenical Patriarch.

Third, your expropriations of lands belonging to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as a result of a policy in which the state takes possession of lands not being directly used by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and of lands of those who emigrated or died without heirs, is very worrisome to us. This policy deprives the Ecumenical Patriarchate of both badly needed funds and cultural patrimony.

All Americans and all seekers of peace highly value Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's accomplishments. As you surely know, the U.S. Congress has bestowed on His All Holiness America's highest honor, the Congressional Gold Medal, and it did so with the largest number of cosponsors on record at that time.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate – the Sacred See, which has survived since its establishment by the Apostle Andrew nearly two thousand years ago – will disappear in the foreseeable future, unless Turkey changes its policies. We urge you, in friendship and respect, to do everything possible to preserve the Ecumenical Patriarchate and to end all restrictions on its religious freedom.

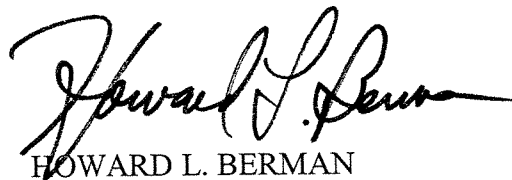
Sincerely,



TOM LANTOS
Chairman



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Ranking Republican Member



HOWARD L. BERMAN



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH



GARY L. ACKERMAN

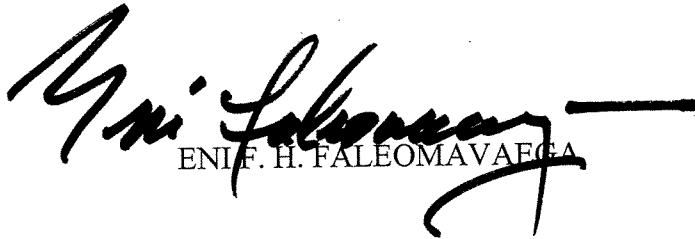


ELTON GALLEGLY

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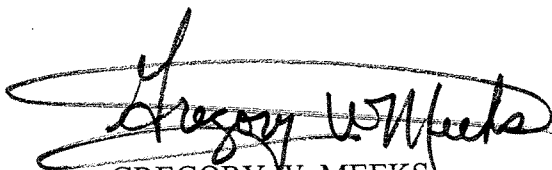

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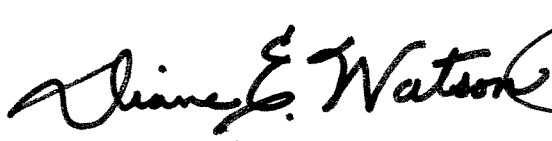

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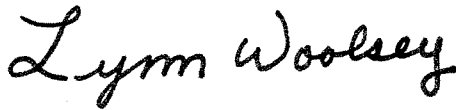
MIKE PENCE



RUSS CARNAHAN



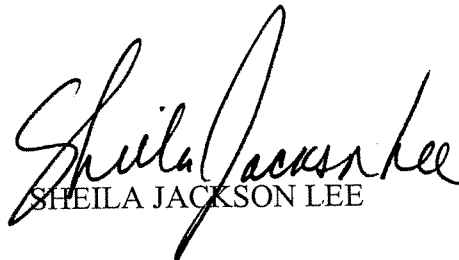
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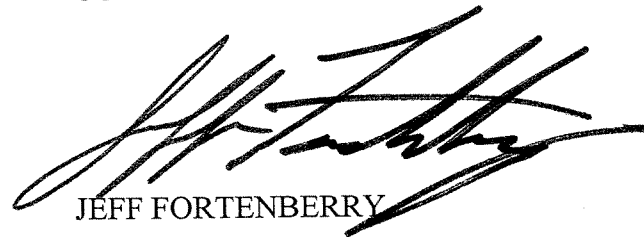
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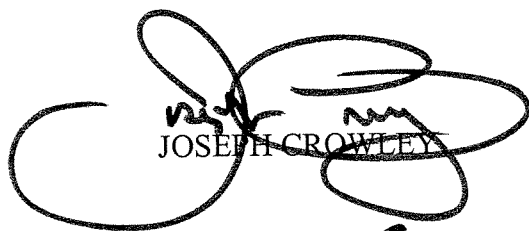
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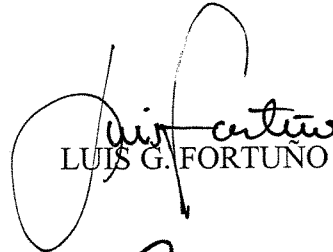
BRAD MILLER



BOB INGLIS

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