

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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**HOUSE RESOLUTION**

**No. 876** Session of 2006

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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

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,  
OCTOBER 3, 2006

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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

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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  
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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  
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

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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.