



SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION
No. 11
STATE OF NEW JERSEY
212th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2006 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Senator BOB SMITH

District 17 (Middlesex and Somerset)

Senator JOSEPH M. KYRILLOS, JR.

District 13 (Middlesex and Monmouth)

SYNOPSIS

Urges Turkey to respect rights and religious freedoms of Ecumenical Patriarchate.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel

A JOINT RESOLUTION urging Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey refuses to recognize the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the Greek Orthodox Christian Church which is a minority religion in Turkey; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to the Holy Synod for selection as the Ecumenical Patriarch to Turkish nationals and reneged on its agreement to reopen the Theological School at Halki, thus impeding training for the clergy; and

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has confiscated most of the properties of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and has placed a 42 percent retroactive tax on the Balukli Hospital which is 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 to the European Union at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to have achieved 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, Under the terms of the draft European Union Constitution, current and prospective member nations should have the goal of eliminating discrimination based on any ground, such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, national minority membership, property, birth, disability, age, or sexual orientation; and

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

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The Governor and Legislature of the State of New Jersey call on the Government of Turkey to eliminate all forms of discrimination, particularly those based on race or religion, and immediately grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession and the right to train clergy of all nationalities. New Jersey calls on the Government of Turkey to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

2. The Governor and Legislature of the State of New Jersey call on the Government of Turkey to pledge to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise and encourages Turkey to continue the advancement of processes and programs to modernize and democratize its own society, in light of its potential accession to the European Union.

3. This joint resolution shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This resolution urges Turkey to respect the rights and religious freedoms of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Turkey continues to limit the rights of minority Greek Orthodox Christians through acts such as seizing property, including a major hospital, orphanage and theological school.

The resolution urges Turkey to recognize its ill treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and change its treatment so that, if and when it is accepted as a member of the European Union, its goals and actions will comply with the draft European Union Constitution and mirror those of other member nations. The draft Constitution of the European Union states that the Union's values are "respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities." It states that the goal of the Union is to "strengthen the protection of fundamental rights in light of changes in society, social progress and scientific and technological developments...." Turkey did not satisfactorily reform its treatment of the Patriarchate before accession discussions began with the European Union on October 3, 2005, but is urged to do so during such negotiations.