

House of Representatives

House Resolution 415

By: Representatives Cheokas of the 134th, Wilkinson of the 52nd, Walker of the 107th, Keown of the 173rd, Davis of the 122nd, and others

A RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of Turkey to grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastical succession, and the right to train clergy of all nationalities and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and for other purposes.

WHEREAS, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, located in Istanbul, Turkey, is the Sacred See that presides in a spirit of brotherhood over a communion of self-governing churches of the Orthodox Christian world; and

WHEREAS, the See is led by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is the 269th in direct succession to the Apostle Andrew and holds titular primacy as primus inter pares, meaning "first among equals," in the community of Orthodox churches world-wide; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, along with leaders of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, cosponsored the Conference on Peace and Tolerance, which brought together Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders for an interfaith dialogue to help end the Balkan conflict and the ethnic conflict in the Caucasus region; and

WHEREAS, in 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold Medal; and

WHEREAS, following the terrorist attacks on our nation on September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered a group of international religious leaders to produce the first joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned the 9/11 attacks as "antireligious"; and

WHEREAS, in October 2005, the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the Conference on Peace and Tolerance II to further promote peace and stability in southeastern Europe, the Caucasus region, and Central Asia via religious leaders' interfaith dialogue, understanding, and action; and

WHEREAS, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members world-wide with more than 2 million members in the United States; and

WHEREAS, since 1453, the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament to the religious coexistence of Christians and Muslims; and

WHEREAS, this religious coexistence is in jeopardy because the Ecumenical Patriarchate is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and

WHEREAS, the Government of Turkey has limited the candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch to only Turkish nationals, and from the millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century and due to the continued policies during this period by the Turkish government, there remain less than 3,000 of the Ecumenical Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and