

By: Representatives Clarke, Banks, Calhoun

To: Rules

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 67

1 A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF TURKEY TO
2 GRANT THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL
3 RECOGNITION, ECCLESIASTICAL SUCCESSION, AND THE RIGHT TO TRAIN
4 CLERGY OF ALL NATIONALITIES AND TO RESPECT THE PROPERTY RIGHTS AND
5 HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE.

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

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

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

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

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



28 WHEREAS, in October 2005, the Ecumenical Patriarch, along
29 with Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders, cosponsored the
30 Conference on Peace and Tolerance II to further promote peace and
31 stability in Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus Region, and Central
32 Asia via religious leaders' interfaith dialogue, understanding and
33 action; and

34 WHEREAS, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for
35 nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members
36 worldwide with more than two million members in the United States;
37 and

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

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

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

51 WHEREAS, the government of Turkey closed the theological
52 school on the island of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow it
53 to reopen, thus impeding training for Orthodox Christian clergy;
54 and

55 WHEREAS, the Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94
56 percent of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed
57 a 42 percent tax, retroactive to 1999, on the Baloukli Hospital
58 and Home for the Aged, a charity hospital run by the Ecumenical
59 Patriarchate; and



60 WHEREAS, the European Union, a group of nations with a common
61 goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its peoples, began
62 accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3, 2005; and

63 WHEREAS, the European Union defined membership criteria for
64 accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating
65 candidate countries to achieve certain levels of reform, including
66 stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, adherence to the
67 rule of law and respect for and protection of minorities and human
68 rights; and

69 WHEREAS, the Turkish government's current treatment of the
70 Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership
71 conditions and goals of the European Union; and

72 WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in this state and throughout the
73 United States stand to lose their spiritual leader because of the
74 continued actions of the Turkish government; and

75 WHEREAS, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the
76 Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each have
77 been honored with a patriarchal title, or "offikion," by the
78 Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding service to the Orthodox
79 Church, will send an American delegation to Turkey to meet with
80 Turkish government officials, as well as the United States
81 Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, regarding the Turkish
82 Government's treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

83 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
84 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE SENATE CONCURRING
85 THEREIN, That the members of this body urge the Government of
86 Turkey to:

87 (1) Uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without
88 compromise;

89 (2) Cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;

90 (3) Grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international
91 recognition, ecclesiastic succession and the right to train clergy
92 of all nationalities; and



93 (4) Respect the property rights and human rights of the
94 Ecumenical Patriarchate.

95 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution be
96 furnished to the President of the United States, the United States
97 Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassador of the
98 Republic of Turkey to the United States, and to the members of the
99 Capitol Press Corps.

