SENATE RESOLUTION

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 300,000,000 members
world-wide with more than 2,000,000 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

WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey closed the Theological
School on the island of Halki in 1971 and has refused to allow
it to reopen, thus impeding training for Orthodox Christian
clergy; and

WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94%
of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties and has placed a
42% tax, retroactive to 1999, on the Baloukli Hospital and Home
for the Aged, a charity hospital 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 at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993,
obligating candidate countries to achieve 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, The Turkish government's current treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership conditions and goals of the European Union; and

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

WHEREAS, The Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, a group of laymen who each have been honored with a patriarchal title, or "offikion", by the Ecumenical Patriarch for their outstanding service to the Orthodox Church, will send an American delegation to Turkey to meet with Turkish government officials, as well as the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, regarding the Turkish government's treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we urge the Government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights without compromise, cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate appropriate
international recognition, ecclesiastic succession, the right to train clergy of all nationalities, and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and be it further

RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be delivered to the President of the United States, the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and to the members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation.