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1 SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 70

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

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

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

17 WHEREAS, In 1997, the Congress of the United States awarded  
18 Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew with the Congressional Gold  
19 Medal; and

20 WHEREAS, Following the terrorist attacks on our nation on  
21 September 11, 2001, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew gathered

1 a group of international religious leaders to produce the first  
2 joint statement with Muslim leaders that condemned the 9/11  
3 attacks as "antireligious"; and

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

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

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

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

20 WHEREAS, The Government of Turkey has limited the  
21 candidates available to hold the office of Ecumenical Patriarch

1 to only Turkish nationals, and from the millions of Orthodox  
2 Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century and  
3 due to the continued policies during this period by the Turkish  
4 government, there remain less than 3,000 of the Ecumenical  
5 Patriarch's flock left in Turkey today; and

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

10 WHEREAS, The Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94%  
11 of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's properties 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  
16 common goal of promoting peace and the well-being of its  
17 peoples, began accession negotiations with Turkey on October 3,  
18 2005; and

19 WHEREAS, The European Union defined membership criteria  
20 for accession at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993,  
21 obligating candidate countries to achieve certain levels of  
22 reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing

1 democracy, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for and  
2 protection of minorities and human rights; and

3 WHEREAS, The Turkish government's current treatment of the  
4 Ecumenical Patriarchate is inconsistent with the membership  
5 conditions and goals of the European Union; and

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

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

18 WHEREAS, We rightly appreciate that the current Turkish  
19 government has made positive improvements over the last 8 years  
20 in its relation to the Ecumenical Patriarchate with respect to  
21 the return of two significant properties formerly in dispute,  
22 with respect to allowing Orthodox clergy in lands outside

1 Turkey to apply and gain citizenship in Turkey to help ensure  
2 the possibility of patriarchal succession, and with respect to  
3 the physical security of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the  
4 recent uncovering and thwarting of a plotted assassination of  
5 Patriarch Bartholomew; and

6 WHEREAS, We recognize that the current Turkish government  
7 has continued to negotiate and publicly address these and other  
8 related issues with a commitment to their resolution in a  
9 manner acceptable to all interested parties; therefore, be it

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

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