

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 6

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION, Urging the government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

WHEREAS, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly two thousand years, numbers approximately three hundred million members worldwide, with more than two 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 doubt because the Ecumenical Patriarchate is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government; and

WHEREAS, there were millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the twentieth century, but there remain fewer than three thousand in Turkey today; and

WHEREAS, Orthodox Christians in South Dakota and throughout the United States are deeply concerned about the possible loss of their spiritual leader; and

WHEREAS, while there have been difficulties in the past with the relationship of the Orthodox Christian Church and the Turkish government, certain recent actions by the Turkish government suggest an interest in improving its relationship with and treatment of the Orthodox Christian Church, and such actions are acknowledged and welcomed by the Christian Orthodox community; and

WHEREAS, the people of South Dakota desire to encourage continued dialogue and communication between the leadership of the Turkish government and the Orthodox Christian Church, such as recent high-level meetings between Turkish officials and the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

WHEREAS, many state Legislatures have already expressed similar sentiments and concerns in legislative resolutions; and

WHEREAS, eighty-nine United States Senators, including Senator John Thune and Senator Tim Johnson, recently signed a letter to President Obama declaring that the restoration of religious

freedom and human rights for Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew is in the best interests of people of all faiths, including those in both America and Turkey:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Senate of the Eighty-seventh Legislature of the State of South Dakota, the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the Legislature urges the government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights of all its citizens without exception, 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 all religious and faith traditions.

Adopted by the Senate,
Concurred in by the House of Representatives,

February 21, 2012
February 23, 2012

Matt Michels
President of the Senate

Fee Jacobsen
Secretary of the Senate

Val Rausch
Speaker of the House

Karen Gerdes
Chief Clerk of the House