

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 4014

Introduced by

Senator Mathern

Representative Maragos

1 A concurrent resolution urging the Government of Turkey to grant the Ecumenical Patriarch
2 appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastical succession, and the right to train clergy of all
3 nationalities and to respect the property rights and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;
4 and for other purposes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 **WHEREAS**, the Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years, numbers
2 approximately 300,000,000 members worldwide with more than 2,000,000 members in the
3 United States; and

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

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

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

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

16 **WHEREAS**, the Turkish government has confiscated nearly 94 percent of the Ecumenical
17 Patriarchate's properties; and

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

21 **WHEREAS**, the European Union defined membership criteria for accession at the
22 Copenhagen European Council in 1993, obligating candidate countries to achieve certain levels
23 of reform, including stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, adherence to the rule of
24 law, and respect for and protection of minorities and human rights; and

25 **WHEREAS**, the Turkish government's current treatment of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is
26 inconsistent with the membership conditions and goals of the European Union; and

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

29 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE**
30 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN:**

1 That the North Dakota Legislative Assembly urges the Government of Turkey to uphold and
2 safeguard religious and human rights; cease its discrimination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate;
3 grant the Ecumenical Patriarch appropriate international recognition, ecclesiastic succession,
4 and the right to train clergy of all nationalities; and respect the property rights and human rights
5 of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; and

6 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Secretary of State forward copies of this resolution
7 to the President of the United States, the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Turkey,
8 the Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the United States, and the members of the North
9 Dakota Congressional Delegation.