

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
82S10165 CBE-D

S.R. 36
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Business & Commerce
6/16/2011
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Orthodox Christian Church, in existence for nearly 2,000 years, numbers approximately 300 million members worldwide, with more than 2 million members in the United States. Since 1453, the continuing presence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Turkey has been a living testament to religious coexistence. This religious coexistence is in doubt because the Ecumenical Patriarchate is considered a minority religion by the Turkish government. There were millions of Orthodox Christians living in Turkey at the turn of the 20th century, but there remain fewer than 3,000 in Turkey today. Orthodox Christians in Texas and throughout the United States stand to lose their spiritual leader.

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. The people of Texas 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.

RESOLVED

That the Senate of the 82nd Texas Legislature, 1st Called Session, hereby urge the government of Turkey to uphold and safeguard religious and human rights of all its citizens without compromise, 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.