

### *Congressman King joins Congressional letter expressing concern over Turkish government's interference with Orthodox Christian Church*

Washington, D.C.- Congressman Steve King (R-IA) today announced that he has signed onto a Congressional letter that asks President Obama to urge the government of Turkey to take specific steps to end its ongoing interference with the religious freedom of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is the highest see and holiest center for 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide. King discussed the issue of Turkish interference with the Orthodox Christian Church while meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and New Rome, during a recent Congressional delegation trip to Turkey, Cyprus and Greece.



*(From Right to Left): Congressman Steve King meets with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the 270th successor of the 2,000 year old local Christian Church founded by St. Andrew the*

*Apostle. (Photo Credit: N. Manginas)*

"During my recent meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, we discussed the Turkish government's continued interference with the affairs of the Orthodox Christian Church," said King. "Turkey has placed severe restrictions on the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and many believe that these restrictions threaten the very existence of a Church that was founded 2,000 years ago by the Apostle Andrew. The President should make it clear to Turkish leaders that he is concerned with Turkey's continued interference with the affairs of this Church because the United States is committed to religious freedom both at home and abroad."

The letter to President Obama is being circulated by Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA), Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Among its requests are that the President encourage Turkey to return confiscated Church property, to reopen the Halki Theological School, and to cease its interference in the selection of Church leaders. To date, the letter has been signed by 271 Members of Congress.

Additional photos of Congressman King's meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew are available on the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople's website by clicking [here](#).

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