

life has the soothing warmth of its summers and the piercing chill of its winters. And if one will hold on, he will discover that God walks with him, and that God is able to lift you from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope, and transform dark and desolate valleys into sunlit paths of inner peace."

I think there are a lot of people this week who need that hope. I think there are a lot of people who worry and fear: Will they feel the same despair that so many others have felt when a loved one is killed because of hatred?

We owe it to Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robertson, and Cynthia Wesley to do our best every day to build what Dr. King called the "beloved community," where someone will not go to a college campus, a church, or to the movie theater and have their lives snuffed out solely because someone hated them.

We can get there if we focus on building community out of chaos, if we focus on the goodness of everybody, and if we focus on love.

I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

HONORING THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH, H.H. BARTHOLOMEW I

(Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2025, Mr. BILIRAKIS of Florida was recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.)

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHREVE). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the gentlewoman from Virginia. Well said this evening. I appreciate the gentlewoman's kind words.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today not only as co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on International Religious Freedom and the Hellenic Caucus, but, more importantly, as an Orthodox Christian. I am here to honor and welcome His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch, who is visiting the United States this week.

This visit is a huge blessing for the Orthodox family in the United States, Mr. Speaker. Not only is His All Holiness a great spiritual leader, but he is also an unparalleled ambassador for peace, interfaith dialogue, and religious freedom. As we honor him today for a lifetime of achievements, Mr. Speaker, I think of his legacy in three words: faith, peace, and endurance.

First, faith; His All Holiness has led millions of the faithful in the global Orthodox church for more than 34 years, conscientiously carrying the leg-

acy of Saint Andrew the Apostle and upholding the 2,000-year-old traditions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Holy See for over 300 million Orthodox faithful worldwide.

His leadership of the Eastern Orthodox community has impacted and will continue to impact this ancient church and doctrine for centuries to come.

However, his role extends far beyond the Orthodox church, which brings me to the second point, peace. Throughout his selfless service, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has been at the forefront of interreligious dialogue, setting the stage for a more peaceful and cohesive world. He has a record of reaching out and working for peace and reconciliation amongst all faiths and has fostered dialogue among Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

Just last month, Mr. Speaker, he hosted the annual Religions for Peace World Council, bringing together leaders of diverse faiths to address global challenges.

His All Holiness' leadership in these groundbreaking conventions has not only been about theology, but to engage faith with humanity's most pressing challenges.

From his historic visit to the Korean Demilitarized Zone in 2018 to his current efforts promoting coexistence in the Middle East, His All Holiness' pursuit of global peace in the world's most challenging conflicts has truly touched the lives and hearts of millions.

In fact, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew received, on his first official visit to the United States in 1997, the Congressional Gold Medal presented by my father, Michael Bilirakis, and many, many others. It was presented by the United States on behalf of the Congress in recognition of his outstanding and enduring contributions to religious understanding and peace and was recognized by the United States in a manner reserved for a very small number of world leaders, as you know, Mr. Speaker, leaders such as George Washington, Winston Churchill, and Pope John Paul II.

Most dear to my heart, however, is his life of enduring advocacy for his persecuted church, as well as other oppressed religious minorities.

□ 2020

Recently, when the Egyptian Government confiscated the holy Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew stood as defender of Christian heritage. This monastery is not just a Greek Orthodox treasure but an ancient house to Christianity's most valued heritage, including the sacred tree, the Burning Bush, where our God revealed himself to Moses.

For months now, Mr. Speaker, His All Holiness has led a global movement demanding that the Egyptian Government honor this heritage and protect the autonomy of the monastic community in Sinai. For those of us in Congress who have worked to preserve the

monastery's independence and existence, his advocacy is a source of inspiration.

His All Holiness' mission to protect the Christian community and its heritage in Türkiye is just another example of his noble pursuit. In the last hundred years, the Turkish state has systematically exploited its Christian communities unfortunately, reducing them from 20 percent of the population to a mere 2 percent.

To this day, the Turkish Government refuses to recognize His All Holiness' ecumenical jurisdiction, stripping him of the universal title that is acknowledged by more than 300 million faithful across the globe.

Mr. Speaker, His All Holiness has endured in silence discrimination under Erdogan's regime. This body must insist that Türkiye eliminate all forms of discrimination, particularly discrimination based on race or religion, grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate appropriate recognition and ecclesiastical succession, grant the Ecumenical Patriarchate the right to train clergy of all nationalities, not just Turkish nationals, by reopening the famed and beautiful Theological School at Halki, which I visited in 2019 with my beautiful wife.

Türkiye must absolutely reopen the jewel of Christendom, the Hagia Sophia, Church of the Holy Wisdom of God, as a church, not a mosque. The Hagia Sophia was the world's largest cathedral for nearly 1,000 years. It served as a center for all Christians until the Ottoman invasion in 1453, which saw the collapse of Constantinople as well as the church.

For decades, it had been converted to a museum and has been a UNESCO Heritage site until Erdogan illegally converted it into a mosque 5 years ago.

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, about the persecution His All Holiness and the Ecumenical Patriarchate has faced under Erdogan's rule. It is maddening, as far as I am concerned.

But Ankara's violations go far beyond just Christian communities. Just over the summer, Mr. Speaker, the government authorities in Istanbul arrested 41 Muslim women, including 15 minor girls, solely based on their religious expression.

As the Turkish Government converts ancient churches to mosques, intimidates clergy, and displaces religious and ethnic minorities, His All Holiness has continued to peacefully advocate for the voiceless, which is why I take this occasion to call on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom to designate Türkiye as a country of particular concern under U.S. law.

It is incumbent upon us to recognize His All Holiness as a living testament for Türkiye's explicit mission to erase its native Christian community and to respond to such cynical plans with the seriousness they deserve.

As we honor His All Holiness today, let us not only celebrate his faithfulness and mission of peace but commit

ourselves to defending the rights of his church and the protection of all persecuted religious minorities.

The timing of the Ecumenical Patriarch's visit could not be more ideal as America is grieving the loss of a true warrior of God, Charlie Kirk, who through his death has shown all of us that we must be defenders of our faith, even if that puts us in danger. I am going to say it again. We must be defenders of our faith, even if it puts us in danger.

We have to be a voice for the voiceless. We must be convicted and stay the course so that our faith is not extinguished by bad actors.

To honor both His All Holiness and America's martyr, Charlie Kirk, is to take up their cause, the cause of religious freedom, the cause of peaceful co-existence, and the cause of standing up to those who oppress others.

I wish my friend and my spiritual father, Ecumenical Patriarch, a safe and fruitful visit as he inspires not only the Orthodox faithful but all who love peace, understanding, and humanity.

May God bless His All Holiness, our Patriarchate in Constantinople, now Istanbul, our beautiful 2,000-year old faith and Orthodox Church.

May God bless the United States of America.

I also wanted to say that Archbishop Iakovos stood with Martin Luther King and marched at Selma. He was called by Martin Luther King. It is depicted in the movie, Mr. Speaker, "Selma." He was called by Martin Luther King. He showed up for the march. Martin Luther King apparently told him: Wow, I am surprised—something to that effect. He said his final words were, before the march: You called, and I came.

We must stand up to racism. We must stand up to any form of discrimination, in this case religious freedom.

I appreciate all of you. I know there are others that will speak at a later time, but I want to welcome this wonderful individual who visited the White House today with President Trump, just an outstanding person and a wonderful role model for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, God bless you and God bless America.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 8 o'clock and 29 minutes p.m.), under its previous order, the House adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 10 a.m. for morning-hour debate.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows:

[Submitted September 12, 2025]

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky: Committee on Appropriations. H.R. 5342. A bill making ap-

propriations for the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and for other purposes (Rept. 119-272). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

[Submitted September 15, 2025]

Mr. BOST: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. H.R. 3494. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out an information technology system and prioritize certain requirements to manage supply chains for medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, with an amendment (Rept. 119-273). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. BOST: Committee on Veterans' Affairs. H.R. 2721. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish and carry out a pilot program to furnish a headstone or burial marker to veterans who died on or before November 1, 1990, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 119-274). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. GRAVES: Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. H.R. 3427. A bill to require the Comptroller General of the United States to review all clean water-related technical assistance authorities of the Environmental Protection Agency, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 119-275). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 528. A bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to carry out a program for Post-Disaster Reforestation and Restoration Program, and for other purposes (Rept. 119-276, Pt. 1). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 655. A bill to direct the Secretary of Agriculture to convey certain Federal land to the City of The Dalles, Oregon, with an amendment (Rept. 119-277). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 831. A bill to establish an interest-bearing account for the non-Federal contributions to the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 119-278). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 972. A bill to amend the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area Act to adjust the boundary of the Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area, and for other purposes (Rept. 119-279). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 1045. A bill to amend the Southwest Forest Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of 2004 to require the establishment of an additional Institute under that Act (Rept. 119-280, Pt. 1). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 1276. A bill to remove restrictions from a parcel of land in Paducah, Kentucky, with an amendment (Rept. 119-281). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 1676. A bill to amend the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act to require the Secretary of the Interior to approve the wildlife conservation and restoration program of a State within a certain period of time, with an amendment (Rept. 119-282). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 1809. A bill to reauthorize funding to monitor, assess, and research the Great Lakes Basin (Rept. 119-283). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2290. A bill to provide that the memorial to commemorate the sacrifice and service of the women who worked on the home front to support the efforts of the United States military during World War II may be located on the National Mall, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 119-284). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2293. A bill to require the Secretary of the Interior to reissue certain regulations relating to the taking of double-crested cormorants at aquaculture facilities, with an amendment (Rept. 119-285). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2302. A bill to take certain Federal land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 119-286). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2388. A bill to take certain Federal land in the State of Washington into trust for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, and for other purposes (Rept. 119-287). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2389. A bill to take certain land in the State of Washington into trust for the benefit of the Quinault Indian Nation, and for other purposes (Rept. 119-288). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2400. A bill to take certain Federal land in the State of California into trust for the benefit of the Pit River Tribe, with an amendment (Rept. 119-289). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 2876. A bill to confirm the use of certain non-Federal land in Salt Lake City, Utah, for public purposes, and for other purposes (Rept. 119-290). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 3176. A bill to amend the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act to reauthorize the National Volcano Early Warning and Monitoring System (Rept. 119-291). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 3187. A bill to require the Secretary of Agriculture to convey a parcel of property of the Forest Service to Perry County, Arkansas, and for other purposes; with an amendment (Rept. 119-292). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 3857. A bill to amend the Snow Water Supply Forecasting Program Authorization Act, with an amendment (Rept. 119-293). Referred to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union.

Mr. WESTERMAN: Committee on Natural Resources. H.R. 4285. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to designate an entrance-free date in 2026 at National Park Service sites in order to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America,