

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 37

BY STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

STATING FINDINGS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND RECOGNIZING AND COMMENDING THE LONG-STANDING TRADITIONS OF INTERFAITH TOLERANCE, INCLUSION AND HARMONY IN AZERBAIJAN, AND APPLAUDING THE EFFORTS BY AZERBAIJAN TO FOSTER THESE TRADITIONS.

Be It Resolved by the Legislature of the State of Idaho:

WHEREAS, the Republic of Azerbaijan is a staunch ally and partner of the United States in the strategically important South Caucasus region bordering Iran, Russia, Turkey and Central Asia; and

WHEREAS, having ancient traditions of interfaith tolerance, inclusion and positive multiculturalism, the secular nation of Azerbaijan offers an environment where Muslims, Jews and Christians enjoy peaceful coexistence and live in dignity, harmony and respect for each other; and

WHEREAS, Azerbaijan was home to one of the earliest Christian nations in the world, and the Christian community has helped to shape Azerbaijan's history throughout the ages, and today this 450,000 people strong community remains an important and vibrant part of Azerbaijani culture and society; and

WHEREAS, living alongside of the Christian and Muslim communities is a thriving Jewish community of about 30,000 that also has a long heritage in Azerbaijan dating back more than two thousand years, and when, over the centuries, Jews in the surrounding regions found themselves persecuted, they found Azerbaijan as a haven, and during World War II many European Jews escaping Nazi persecutions found shelter in Azerbaijan; and

WHEREAS, the Jewish community is an integral part of Azerbaijan's economic, cultural and political life, and today synagogues and Jewish schools flourish in the country; and

WHEREAS, it is no coincidence that Azerbaijan is one of the very few secular countries in the wider Middle East and Eurasia with a predominately Muslim population that maintains close, friendly ties with the State of Israel; and

WHEREAS, the three major religions have prospered because of the age-old respect and tolerance of the Azerbaijani people, but also because of an important role the government of the Republic of Azerbaijan has played in constantly fostering the environment of interfaith tolerance, mutual acceptance and respect in the country; and

WHEREAS, since the very beginning of independence, Azerbaijan has created an environment that nurtures and promotes the ancient tradition of religious tolerance, and rejects radicalism, extremism and hatred; Azerbaijan sees diversity as one of the country's great strengths and virtues and has worked to ensure that this diversity continues to blossom; and

WHEREAS, Azerbaijan has recently built and rebuilt churches and synagogues and created new cultural centers for different faiths; the country has financially supported all three religions without discrimination, all

1 the while making sure that Christians and Jews are represented in all three  
2 branches of the government in Azerbaijan; and

3 WHEREAS, Azerbaijan has repeatedly, over the course of the last decade,  
4 brought together religious leaders from the region and around the world to  
5 promote interfaith dialogue--an example that is sorely needed--and in April  
6 2016 Azerbaijan will host the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Fo-  
7 rum; and

8 WHEREAS, 2016 has been proclaimed a Year of Multiculturalism by Azer-  
9 baijan; and

10 WHEREAS, the United States of America also has an interest in such a suc-  
11 cess story, since Azerbaijan, secular, tolerant, and inclusive, is crucial  
12 to a region ridden with hatred and strife; and

13 WHEREAS, given the rising levels of radicalism, terrorism, hate, xeno-  
14 phobia and intolerance in the world, it is important for the United States of  
15 America to support its tolerant and secular allies and consider the Azerbai-  
16 jani model of interfaith acceptance and community engagement as a function-  
17 ing example, and to encourage this policy around the globe.

18 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the Second Regular Ses-  
19 sion of the Sixty-third Idaho Legislature, the House of Representatives and  
20 the Senate concurring therein, that we do hereby recognize and commend the  
21 long-standing traditions of interfaith tolerance, inclusion and harmony in  
22 Azerbaijan, and we applaud the efforts by Azerbaijan to foster these tradi-  
23 tions, which can be a model and functioning example in these troubled times.