Washington, DC (July 9, 2012) – As a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Co-Chair of the House Hellenic Caucus and member of the International Religious Freedom Caucus, Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Palm Harbor) issued the following statement regarding continued calls from leaders within Turkey for the country to re-open the Theological School of Halki, which was forcibly closed in 1971:

"While I am encouraged by the latest push to re-open the Halki seminary, we must continue to put pressure on Turkey to abide by its constitution, which ensures religious rights for all citizens and institutions. The Halki seminary had been the premier location for training Eastern Orthodox clergy for nearly 150 years, and the worldwide Orthodox Christian community deserves to have this fundamental right restored immediately."

Bilirakis has introduced H. Res. 506 , which calls on the government of Turkey to re-open the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Theological School of Halki immediately and without any conditions. The resolution has 35 co-sponsors and has been passed by the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Related News: Turkey urged to ease up on Greek Orthodox seminary (Associated Press, July 5, 2012)