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### **Congressman John Sarbanes Organizes Inaugural St. Andrew's Human Rights and Religious Freedom Reception**



Washington, DC – On November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011, Congressman John Sarbanes organized the first annual St. Andrew's Human Rights and Religious Freedom Reception. The Reception was hosted by Senator Ben Cardin and Chris Smith of The Helsinki Commission, Representatives Frank Wolf and James P. McGovern of The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, Representatives Trent Franks and Heath Shuler of The International Religious Freedom Caucus and Representatives Gus Bilirakis, Carolyn Maloney and John Sarbanes of The Hellenic Caucus.

Opening remarks on the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate were offered by Peter Marudas. The State Department's Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom, Suzan Johnson Cook, also spoke to the Obama Administration's support for the Ecumenical Patriarchate. These remarks were followed by a presentation of "The Apostle of Love, Hope and Reconciliation," a short documentary film about the mission of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

The event was widely attended by the Pan-Orthodox Community and others who support the Ecumenical Patriarchate in its struggle for human rights and religious freedom. The many members of Congress who came to offer their well wishes were given a brochure detailing the plight of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and a replica coin of the Congressional Gold Medal awarded to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew by the U.S. Congress.

St. Andrew is the patron saint of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and on November 30<sup>th</sup> he is venerated in both the Western and Eastern Church. Keeping with tradition all guests were treated to pastries and refreshments in honor of the Feast Day.

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