

House Republican Press Release

February 26, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Miller Supports Ban of Protests at Military Funerals



Legislation would Prohibit Disturbing Services for Fallen Soldiers

HARTFORD- Calling the practice of protesting at military funerals “deplorable” Representative Lawrence Miller (R- 122) has co-sponsored legislation this session that would ban protestors from disturbing the funeral services for military personnel.

Under provisions of the legislation, any individual willfully making or assisting in making noise, diversions, and disturbs the peace or good order of a funeral or goes within three hundred feet of the boundary of the location of such a funeral in an attempt to willfully impede access or egress to the location would be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

“A military funeral is not the place for protestors to voice their opinions,” said Miller. “When a serviceman or woman who has made the ultimate sacrifice while defending our freedoms is being honored and laid to rest, the very last thing that should be tolerated is an attempt by anyone to intentionally disrupt the sanctity and honor of the event. Those who lack basic decency, and fool themselves into thinking they are scoring political points for a cause by disrupting a soldier’s funeral should face prosecution.”

Miller dismissed the notion that such a bill might infringe on free speech rights. “There is a time and a place for all political and social discourse,” said Miller. “This bill doesn’t prevent anyone from speaking their mind, or protesting for causes or against wars. Naturally, the freedom to do so is constitutionally protected, and remains one of the principle rights the men and women who return to us in flag-draped caskets fought to preserve. However, Americans have the right to demand that respect is given to those in the armed forces who gave their lives and to their families as well. No family should have to lay to rest one of their own while suffering the additional torment of misguided ‘demonstrators’.”

Last December, a church group based in Kansas demonstrated at a soldier’s funeral in East Lyme. The same organization has coordinated other protests at military funerals nationwide.

The bill received a public hearing before the Veterans' Affairs Committee on Thursday, with Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal offering his support to the measure.