

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Ryan Testifies in Favor of Bill to Stop Funeral Disruptions



HARTFORD - State Representative John J. Ryan (R-Darien and Rowayton) today submitted written testimony for his bill HB- 6060 An Act Concerning Disruption of a Funeral, which was heard in the General Assembly's Judiciary Committee.

HB- 6060 An Act Concerning Disruption of a Funeral would establish a penalty for the willful and unauthorized disruption of a funeral or memorial that takes place within the sixty minutes before or after the funeral or memorial and within five hundred feet of the funeral or memorial.

Rep. Ryan said, "The bill balances the right of the individuals to assemble in protest while protecting the sanctity and solemn right for a funeral for an individual that has given their life for that freedom."

Attorney General Richard Blumenthal testified in support of the bill and further expressed his believe that the bill is constitutionally sound after having had cited several U.S. Supreme Court precedents.

Others testifying in favor of the bill cited the case of Captain Jason R. Hamill's funeral, a soldier who died in Iraq, in East Lyme, CT where a group chose the venue of Hamill's funeral to disrupt the funeral and its mourners with hateful and discriminatory verbal communication.

The bill has backing of the *Patriot Guard Riders*, a group of riders from across the nation, who attend the funeral services of fallen American heroes as invited guests of the family.

Their two basic objectives are to show our sincere respect for our fallen heroes, their families, and their communities and shield the mourning family and friends from interruptions created by any protestor or group of protestors through strictly legal and non-violent means. The *Patriot Guard Riders* form human shields at funerals to distance mourners from protests. As of December 2006, the group reported over 70,000 members.

Rep. Ryan said, “This bill seeks to save the *Patriot Guard Riders* their labors by banning protests one hour before and one hour after a funeral, and would require protesters to stay at least 500 feet from mourners.”

Similar legislation has passed on the Federal level, which prohibits the same types of actions at all Federal Veterans' Cemeteries through both houses of Congress and has been signed by the President.