

House Republican Press Release

May 9, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Ryan Hails Passage of Bill to Stop Funeral Disruptions



“Permits Families to have Uninterrupted Services”

HARTFORD - State Representative John J. Ryan (R-Darien and Rowayton) today hailed the passage by the state House of Representatives of HB- 6060, *An Act Concerning Disruption of a Funeral*. The measure 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, “Frankly, I am dismayed and troubled that we have to pass a law to tell people that they cannot use funerals of fallen soldiers as a stage for their protests. Imagine families having to walk past a multitude of sign waving, yelling people, to get to the funeral of a loved one who died fighting to protect these protesters’ constitutional right to freedom of speech. This bill is a measured proposal that asks for respect and reverence without infringing on anyone’s constitutional rights.”

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, “I especially want to thank fellow Darienite Dave Polett, who called this topic to my attention, and for his dedication and that of his fellow Patriot Riders. This is just one more example of how many of the best ideas for government come, not from politicians, but from constituents.”

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.

The bill will now head to the State Senate and then to Governor M. Jodi Rell for her possible signature.