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Paul opposes ill-named bill *HR1691 will restrict, not protect, religious liberty*

WASHINGTON, DC -- In classic Washington, DC, form, the "Religious Liberty Protection Act" (HR1691) is nothing of the sort, and in fact just the opposite, said US Rep. Ron Paul (R, Texas), who is voting against the measure. Rep. Paul said the legislation flies in the face of the First Amendment's clear statement that Congress "shall make no law" prohibiting the "free exercise" of religion. "However, HR1691 specifically prevents free exercise whenever the government claims a 'compelling interest.' Of course, that compelling interest is not defined, so it could be literally anything." Such loose language, said Dr. Paul, gives bureaucrats and the courts near-free reign over religious exercise in the United States. "Nowhere does the legislation actually enforce the spirit of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution. Rather, its design is to impose a national standard of 'religious liberty' beyond what the federal government is allowed to do under our Constitution," said Rep. Paul. "It is telling that one of the staunchest supporters of the measure is the liberal Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. On the other hand, opposing the legislation are such stalwarts of the conservative movement as Eagle Forum, the Religious Freedom Coalition, the Christian Action Network and the Home School Legal Defense Association, among many others not supporting it." While there have been instances of state governments improperly restricting religious liberty, Rep. Paul pointed that most instances dealt with the government schools. "It is unreasonable to assume that religious freedom will be enhanced or better protected by a national 'terms of infringement.' This legislative standard is ill defined, therefore granting the federal courts, federal agencies and even Congress great ability to wreak even more havoc. Just as the federal government has mishandled the abortion issue -- first by improperly intruding, and now by actually subsidizing -- we can expect our religious liberties to be as casually dismissed as pre-born life." As government gets larger, it will continue to be caught in the "hopeless paradox wherein tolerance of religious exercise in public facilities is irrationally considered 'establishment,' while restricting exercise in other venues is not deemed 'infringement.'" "Our nation does not need more unconstitutional laws an doublespeak definitions of liberty and infringement; we instead need all levels of government -- including the courts -- to respect the existing constitutional limitations. Doing so will ensure the religious liberty of all Americans."