

Remarks on Violent Radicalization & Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act, HR 1955

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Rep. Ron Paul, M.D.

Madame Speaker, I regret that I was unavoidably out of town on October 23, 2007, when a vote was taken on HR 1955, the Violent Radicalization & Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act. Had I been able to vote, I would have voted against this misguided and dangerous piece of legislation. This legislation focuses the weight of the US government inward toward its own citizens under the guise of protecting us against “violent radicalization.”

I would like to note that this legislation was brought to the floor for a vote under suspension of regular order. These so-called “suspension” bills are meant to be non-controversial, thereby negating the need for the more complete and open debate allowed under regular order. It is difficult for me to believe that none of my colleagues in Congress view HR 1955, with its troubling civil liberties implications, as “non-controversial.”

There are many causes for concern in HR 1955. The legislation specifically singles out the Internet for “facilitating violent radicalization, ideologically based violence, and the homegrown terrorism process” in the United States. Such language may well be the first step toward US government regulation of what we are allowed to access on the Internet. Are we, for our own good, to be subjected to the kind of governmental control of the Internet that we see in unfree societies? This bill certainly sets us on that course.

This seems to be an unwise and dangerous solution in search of a real problem. Previous acts of ideologically-motivated violence, though rare, have been resolved successfully using law enforcement techniques, existing laws against violence, and our court system. Even if there

were a surge of “violent radicalization” -- a claim for which there is no evidence -- there is no reason to believe that our criminal justice system is so flawed and weak as to be incapable of trying and punishing those who perpetrate violent acts.

This legislation will set up a new government bureaucracy to monitor and further study the as-yet undemonstrated pressing problem of homegrown terrorism and radicalization. It will no doubt prove to be another bureaucracy that artificially inflates problems so as to guarantee its future existence and funding. But it may do so at great further expense to our civil liberties. What disturbs me most about this legislation is that it leaves the door wide open for the broadest definition of what constitutes “radicalization.” Could otherwise non-violent anti-tax, antiwar, or anti-abortion groups fall under the watchful eye of this new government commission? Assurances otherwise in this legislation are unconvincing.

In addition, this legislation will create a Department of Homeland Security-established university-based body to further study radicalization and to “contribute to the establishment of training, written materials, information, analytical assistance and professional resources to aid in combating violent radicalization and homegrown terrorism.” I wonder whether this is really a legitimate role for institutes of higher learning in a free society.

Legislation such as this demands heavy-handed governmental action against American citizens where no crime has been committed. It is yet another attack on our Constitutionally-protected civil liberties. It is my sincere hope that we will reject such approaches to security, which will fail at their stated goal at a great cost to our way of life.