

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives May 21, 2002

Mr. Speaker, as a parent, grandparent, and OB-GYN who has delivered over three thousand babies, I certainly share the desire to protect children from pornography and other inappropriate material available on the internet. However, as a United States Congressman, I cannot support measures which exceed the limitations on constitutional power contained in Article one, Section 8 of the Constitution. The Constitution does not provide Congress with the authority to spend taxpayer funds to create new internet domains.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is singularly unqualified to act as the arbiter of what material is inappropriate for children. Instead, this is a decision that should be made by parents. Most of the problems pointed to by proponents of increased government control of the internet are the result of a lack of parental, not governmental, control of children's computer habits. Expanding the government's control over the internet may actually encourage parents to disregard their responsibility to monitor their child's computer habits. After all, why should parents worry about what websites their children is viewing when the government has usurped this parental function?

The market is already creating solutions to many of these problems through the development of filtering software that responsible parents can use to protect their children from inappropriate materials. The best way to address this problem is by allowing this market process to develop, not by creating new government regulations.

In addition to creating new internet domains, Congress is also expanding federal wiretapping powers. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues should also remember that the Constitution creates only three federal crimes, namely treason, piracy, and counterfeiting. Expansion of federal police power for crimes outside these well-defined areas thus violates the Constitution. In addition, expansion of federal wiretapping powers raises serious civil liberties concerns, as such powers easily can be abused by federal officials.

I therefore hope my colleagues will respect the constitutional limitations on federal power. Instead of usurping powers not granted the federal government, Congress should allow state and local law enforcement, schools, local communities, and most of all responsible parents to devise the best measures to protect children.

