

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives May 14, 2002

### No Forced Dress Code for U.S. Soldiers Abroad

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, while I support this legislation, I would like to make a few observations. It is unfortunate that we are in a position where we must act on such legislation. Because of our unwise policy of foreign interventionism, which has placed thousands of American service members in the Middle East including in Saudi Arabia, we are placed in a no-win situation. Either we disregard and mock the customs and culture of Saudi Arabia by refusing to adhere to dress codes that they have adopted, or we subject American women to a dress code that is offensive to our own culture and customs and is disrespectful to the sacrifices they are making for this country. What a choice, Mr. Speaker!

I am voting for this bill because I believe, on the whole, that it is preferable to place concerns about our own citizens over those whose homeland is being defended by American troops. Young Americans join the all-volunteer military as an act of patriotism in hopes of defending their country and their constitution. We in Congress must honor that sacrifice. It is bad enough that our troops are sent around the world to defend foreign soil. Asking them to comply with foreign customs which violate basic American beliefs about freedom in order to appease the very governments our troops are defending adds insult to injury. I do not believe a single female member of the armed forces enlisted for the "privilege" of wearing an abaya while defending the House of Saud or that one single male member of the armed forces enlisted in order to force his female colleagues to wear an abaya.

The fact remains that we continue to maintain troops in a place where they are not needed. It is the consequences of this dangerous policy that concern me most. Isn't it time to return to a more sound foreign policy, one that respects the culture of others by not intervening in their affairs? Is it not time to bring American troops home to protect America, rather than continuing to station them in far off lands where the protection they offer is not needed?