

Conservative group blasts Republican on pledge vote

By Bob Cusack
July 05, 2006

A right-wing group strongly criticized a House Republican after the lawmaker last week helped torpedo a bill that would protect the words “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Along with 14 Judiciary Committee Democrats, Rep. Bob Inglis (S.C.) rejected the bill as it failed on a 15-15 vote. Proponents of the legislation say that the measure will likely be revived, noting that seven Republicans missed the panel vote June 28.

Family Research Council President Tony Perkins made clear that he was not pleased with Inglis.

On the group’s website, Perkins wrote, “Inglis told me he believes it is better to allow federal review of the Pledge if state courts rule the Pledge unconstitutional. ... What disappoints me with Rep. Inglis’s actions is that he did not let his colleagues on the Judiciary Committee know he planned to join the minority on this one. And, worse, he refused to let the Committee reconsider the measure. I had hoped for more from him than that.”

Inglis on Monday told The Hill that he spoke out against the bill in committee an hour before the vote, stating, “I don’t think anyone should have been surprised.”

The lawmaker said he did not support a motion to reconsider because he was asked to change his vote on a bill he does not favor. Inglis added that another committee vote would have happened if any other legislator agreed to change his/her vote, but no one did.

The bill also could have passed if Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) held the vote open longer to allow absent Republicans more time to make the vote, Inglis said.

Inglis described the rationale behind his vote in a statement last week:

“Let’s start by agreeing that we want the words ‘under God’ to remain in the Pledge of Allegiance. ... This bill would prohibit federal courts from hearing cases involving the Pledge of Allegiance. A liberal Congress might someday try to strip the courts of the right to hear cases claiming other constitutional claims — the right to protest at abortion clinics or the right to distribute Gospel tracts, for example.”

He added, “The motives of the bill’s author are good, but we need to do the right thing in the right way. This is the wrong way to try to protect our clear right to recite the Pledge of Allegiance.”

Inglis has an 80 percent rating from the American Conservative Union.

Other social-conservative groups, including the Christian Coalition of America, have lobbied for the passage of the pledge bill, sponsored by Rep. Todd Akin (R-Mo.) and Sen. Jon Kyl (R-Ariz.).

Akin and Kyl introduced the legislation after a federal court of appeals ruled in 2002 that reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools is an unconstitutional “endorsement of religion.”

The ACLU strongly opposes the legislation and in a letter last month urged Congress to reject it.

The bill has 197 co-sponsors in the House and 16 in the Senate.

Close Window