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**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
MARCH 19, 2007**

I appreciate the opportunity to support House Bill 6060, An Act Concerning Disruption of a Funeral.

This legislation would prohibit any person from disrupting a veteran's funeral. Specifically, no person may conduct any activity within the cemetery, mortuary or house of worship involved in such funeral or make any noise or diversion that is not part of funeral with the intent of disturbing the peace or good order of the funeral. Further, no person may intentionally try to impede the access or egress of the location of the funeral. Violation of this provision is a class A misdemeanor with imprisonment of up to 1 year and a criminal fine of up to \$2,000.

Our veterans serve and sacrifice -- risk and lose their lives -- to protect our vital freedoms and national interests. The funeral of a veteran is a significant and solemn event and the family and friends of that veteran are entitled to a peaceful ceremony unmarred by people who seek to make political statements.

This measure is made necessary by an extremely small minority who lack common decency, decorum and respect. A funeral is no place or time for their protests. Especially when one of our veterans is laid to rest, a funeral should be sacrosanct.

House Bill 6060 is a careful and narrow restriction on time, place and manner of free speech. It is limited in time to one hour before and one hour after the funeral and in scope to 150 feet of the location of the funeral or 300 feet of the ingress or egress of the funeral if the activity is an attempt to prevent such ingress or egress. Finally, the restriction is limited only to speech or action intended to disrupt the funeral.

While the First Amendment guarantees the right to free speech, our Supreme Court has repeatedly stated that government may place reasonable time, place and manner restrictions on such speech. See, *Ward v. Rock Against Racism*, 491 U.S. 781 (1991); *Clark v. Community for Creative Non-violence*, 468 U.S. 288 (1984); and *Grayned v. City of Rockford*, 408 U.S. 104 (1972). For example, a local or state agency can require parade organizers obtain a permit but cannot unreasonably deny such permit.

House Bill 6060 is a restriction to protect the sanctity of a veteran's funeral from disruption. I will vigorously defend this law if approved by the General Assembly.

I urge the committee to favorably consider House Bill 6060.