**Rep. Paul says defense bill assures ‘descent into totalitarianism’**

By Jonathan Easley - 12/26/11 09:25 AM ET



GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul warned that the National Defense Authorization Act, which was passed by Congress this month, will accelerate the country’s “slip into tyranny” and virtually assures “our descent into totalitarianism.”

“The founders wanted to set a high bar for the government to overcome in order to deprive an individual of life or liberty,” Paul, the libertarian congressman from Texas, said Monday in a weekly phone message to supporters. “To lower that bar is to endanger everyone. When the bar is low enough to include political enemies, our descent into totalitarianism is virtually assured. The Patriot Act, as bad as its violations against the Fourth Amendment was, was just one step down the slippery slope. The recently passed National Defense Authorization Act continues that slip into tyranny, and in fact, accelerates it significantly.”

The NDAA is the nearly $670 billion defense spending bill that covers the military budget and funding for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One controversial provision mandates the detention of terror suspects and reaffirms the administration’s authority to detain those suspected of having ties to terrorist organizations.

“The Fifth Amendment is about much more than the right to remain silent in the face of government questioning,” Paul continued. “It contains very basic and very critical stipulations about the due process of law. The government cannot imprison a person for no reason and with no evidence presented and without access to legal council. The danger of the NDAA is its alarmingly vague, undefined criteria for who can be indefinitely detained by the U.S. government without trial.”

“It is no longer limited to members of Al Qaeda or the Taliban, but anyone accused of substantially supporting such groups or associated forces,” Paul continued. “How closely associated, and what constitutes substantial support? What if it was discovered that someone who committed a terrorist act was once involved with a charity? Or suppose a political candidate? Are all donors of that candidate or supporters of that candidate now suspects and subject to indefinite detainment? Is that charity now an associated force?”

The White House initially threatened to veto NDAA because of the detainee language, saying it would tie the hands of law enforcement officials. But the administration dropped the veto threat before the bill passed the House, as the bill’s supporters argued that there were sufficient waivers.

“The president’s widely expanded view of his own authority to detain Americans indefinitely even on American soil is for the first time in this legislation codified in law,” Paul said. “That should chill all of us to our cores.”

“The Bill of Rights has no exceptions for really bad people or terrorists or even non-citizens. It is a key check on government power against any person. That is not a weakness in our legal system, it is the very strength of our legal system. The NDAA attempts to justify abridging the Bill of Rights on the theory that rights are suspended in a time of war, and the entire United States is a battlefield in the war on terror. This is a very dangerous development, indeed. Beware.”

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