

WASHINGTON D.C. – Congressman Wally Herger (CA, 02) today issued the following statement after the Democratic majority party in Congress inserted controversial “hate crimes” legislation into the National Defense Authorization Act, the annual measure that sets the nation’s defense policy and authorizes funding for U.S. military personnel and weapon systems for the coming fiscal year:

“I am a passionate supporter of a strong national defense and the men and women who sacrifice greatly to keep America safe and secure. I looked forward to voting in favor of the annual defense bill that authorizes funding for our troops and military.

“Unfortunately, the majority party decided to push their liberal social agenda in the entirely unrelated defense bill. The hate crimes bill that was attached to it puts at risk the constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech, religious expression, and equal protection under the law. It takes the dangerous course of criminalizing thought and could subject religious leaders or groups to criminal investigations or prosecutions for nothing more than expressing their constitutionally-protected beliefs. I could not support a measure that contains this completely unacceptable policy.

“Additionally, I’m outraged that the majority party utilized the one-year defense authorization bill to push a liberal social policy and enact a permanent change in law. The American people have a right to be outraged by this blatant misuse of legislation designed to equip our troops with the tools and resources they need to defend America.”