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**PORTER SPEAKS OUT ON THE FLAG BURNING ISSUE**

“The Supreme Court of the United States has already ruled twice on the issue of flag burning,” said Dr. Steven Porter, Democratic candidate for Congress in the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Pennsylvania. “In both the Texas case and the U.S. case, it declared flag burning to be an expression of free speech protected by the Constitution. What the partisan Republican Congress is now proposing would require an amendment to the Constitution that would curtail that freedom for all of us.

“I am not in favor of flag burning. It is an immature and offensive way to express disagreement with national policy,” Porter continued. “But if a constitutional amendment prohibiting desecration of the flag were to pass, we would all have to abide by it or suffer the penalties. The real issue, however, is whether our nation should begin to curb free speech at all. I have grave reservations about doing that.

“Only once in our history have we tampered with the Constitution to abridge a freedom—prohibition—and that was a colossal disaster. Whittling away at our own civil rights could easily end up turning our nation into a repressive or even totalitarian state. Why stop at the flag? Why not enact amendments to prohibit destroying copies of the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence or the Star Spangled Banner or the King James version of the Bible?

“And why stop with physical desecration? Could we not just as easily prohibit *speaking* ill of the flag or the Constitution or the national anthem or the Declaration? Freedoms are precious. Giving them away because some possible action might offend us is a dangerous policy for a democracy.

“Moreover, for the Republicans to resurrect this issue now in order to distract voters and energize the ultra-conservative rightwing of their party is shameful. Millions of Americans lack health care; Iraq is a tragic mess; gasoline prices have shot through the roof. These are the sorts of issues our Congress ought to be addressing. Playing politics with the Constitution is a cynical ploy which I hope will backfire on Election Day.”

All of Dr. Porter’s positions on the key issues of this campaign are attached to this press release so that they can be disseminated to the public.