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For More Information:
815-254-0000 |
info@repharrybenton.com

State Representative Harry Benton

Benton Bills Target Disrespectful Flag Displays by Government Officials

PLAINFIELD, Ill. — State Rep. Harry Benton, D-Plainfield, has introduced legislation that would prohibit politically motivated efforts to disrespect the flag, responding to a local incident in which a Will County official flew the American flag upside down outside in support of Donald Trump.

“The flag of the United States is an enduring symbol of our national spirit and pride, and of the sacrifices made by every generation of Americans,” Benton said. “As elected leaders, we swear our oath to that flag and the nation it represents, not to a political leader. There’s no excuse for such disrespect of our flag, and the men and women who served to defend it.”

On May 31, Steve Balich, supervisor of Homer Township in Will County, ordered the national flag outside the Homer Township offices to be flown upside down in response to the conviction of former President Donald Trump on 34 felony counts. Benton and others responded with outrage.

On June 11, Benton filed legislation prohibiting such disrespectful conduct. Benton’s House Bill 5860 would make it a crime for a government official to knowingly cause the national flag to be displayed upside down on government property. House Bill 5861 would make doing so a business offense punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000.

Both bills clarify that the flag may only be flown upside down in situations where there is dire distress or extreme danger to life or property—the purpose for which such display is prescribed in the U.S. Flag Code.

“The public official who made this sad choice—to disrespect our nation’s flag and everything it stands for—may be disappointed in the outcome of a certain criminal trial, but that is no excuse,” Benton said. “That he then attempted to deflect rising outrage by draping himself in the very same flag he’d just finished spitting on makes his actions all the more pathetic. We may disagree on a lot of things here in Will County, but this isn’t one of them. Despite our differences, we’re all Americans. Most of us, at least, still think that counts for something.”

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