

**THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW**

February 7, 2011

**Nonini pushes parental rights measure**

Betsy Z. Russell

The Spokesman-Review

Tags: 2011 Idaho Legislature



**Rep. Bob Nonini, R-Coeur d'Alene, argues in the House on Monday for his resolution backing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution supporting parental rights; after much debate, it passed on a 49-20 vote.**

BOISE - Coeur d'Alene Rep. Bob Nonini led a long debate in the Idaho House this morning that ended in a split vote to pass his nonbinding memorial backing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution promoting parental rights.

Nonini said the proposed amendment "will not alter the current state of parental rights in this country. It will simply ensure that our current rights will remain free from erosion due to judicial activism" or international treaties. Nonini said he's convinced there's risk.

"Longstanding constitutional rights are now hanging by a precarious thread," he told the House.

An unusual pairing of minority Democrats and some of the Idaho House's most conservative members debated strongly against the move, saying adding the issue to the U.S. Constitution would give the federal government more of a role in parent-child issues, not less.

Rep. Brian Cronin, D-Boise, noted that he's "in the minority, I suspect, in more ways than one," not only as a minority Democrat but as a parent of young children who would be affected by such an amendment. Cronin said the push for such an amendment originated in the home-school movement, but not all home-schoolers support it.

"The federal government right now has absolutely no constitutional authority to tell you the parent what to do about anything involving your children," Cronin said. By enacting a constitutional amendment, he said, "We might be placing more power in the hands of the federal government and taking away power from the state governments."

Nonini said a major home-school group that has come out against an amendment "is way out of mainstream with home educators," and said numerous "pro-family" groups support it and think the measure will "protect Idaho's families." Nonini said, "This amendment will protect parents from interference both from the federal government and from state governments."

Rep. Pete Nielsen, R-Mountain Home, debated emotionally against the bill, saying, "Right now parental rights happens to be an inalienable right given to you by your heavenly father. I'm not willing to demote it to a constitutional amendment."

Rep. Lenore Barrett, R-Challis, said, "It is a sovereignty issue, it's a 10th Amendment issue, and these decisions should be left up to the state and we the people. The federal government does not observe the Constitution nine times out of 10 as it is, so why give them something else to ignore?"

Rep. John Rusche, D-Lewiston, spoke against the measure as a pediatrician, and told of a 2-year-old who died of serious nutritional deficiency after his parents chose to feed him nothing but cow's milk. "Let's not put the rights of the lives of children in an inferior position," Rusche said. "I think there is a real opportunity to do harm with this."

Backers of the measure, HJM 1, decried the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a treaty that already has been ratified by 194 nations - all nations except the United States and Somalia. Rep. Mike Moyle, R-Star, a supporter of the measure, said, "I have a real concern when we have treaties directing what we can and cannot do with our children."

Rep. Linden Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, said he'd vote for the measure, but he was nervous about adding amendments to the Constitution that could later be misused. "I think we have too many amendments to the Constitution right now," Bateman declared.

The measure passed on a 49-20 vote and now moves to the Senate. It and a proclamation honoring Ronald Reagan were the only legislation acted on by the Idaho House in its Monday session.

**Get more news and information at [Spokesman.com](http://Spokesman.com)**