

Bill would codify 'mother' and 'father' on documents

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WASHINGTON (RNS) A proposed House bill will require the use of "mother" and "father" by all federal agencies and contractors when describing parents, pushing back on a move by the State Department to use "parent" instead.

The Parental Title Protection Act of 2011, sponsored by Rep. Randy Forbes, R-Va., would mandate the use of these words instead of the terms "Parent 1" and "Parent 2."

"These subtle, but nonetheless significant, changes undermine the traditional American family relationships that have served as the bedrock of our nation since its inception," Forbes said in a statement.

Forbes introduced the bill just weeks after the State Department tried to remove the terms "mother" and "father" from records of overseas births. The use of "Parent 1" and "Parent 2" was intended to "provide a gender-neutral description of a child's parents and in recognition of different types of families," the department said at the time.

After criticism from religious and conservative groups, led in part by the Family Research Council, the Department of State backpedaled slightly and agreed to use the terms "Mother or Parent 1" and "Father or Parent 2."

Forbes, a long-time Sunday school teacher and member at Great Bridge Baptist Church in Chesapeake, Va., has been a reliable conservative vote on social issues.

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.