



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

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## ACTION ALERT

**DATE:** January 11, 2008  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

### **NAACP Calls for Passage of Bill to Prevent Youth from Joining Gangs**

#### ***YOUTH PROMISE ACT ALLOWS COMMUNITIES TO INVEST IN AT-RISK YOUTH BEFORE THEY JOIN GANGS***

##### **THE ISSUE:**

The United States, by far, incarcerates its citizens at much greater rates than any other nation in the world. Incarceration costs in the U.S. have risen to \$65 billion a year. African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities are especially over-represented among the prison population. Especially devastating to our communities and to our youth is gang violence: many of the crimes committed by gangs and gang members are reprehensible and cause irreparable harm not only to individual victims but to families and whole neighborhoods as well. While the perpetrators of these crimes must be punished, it is becoming clear that we must take a proactive and preemptive approach and try to steer at-risk youth away from gangs and towards being successful, productive members of our communities before a crime is committed.

Congressman Robert “Bobby” Scott (VA) has introduced H.R. 3826, the “Youth Prison Reduction through Opportunities, Mentoring, Intervention, Support and Education Act” (the “Youth PROMISE Act”) to reduce crime before it happens by investing in research-based programs. The Youth PROMISE Act mobilizes community leaders and invests almost exclusively in prevention and intervention, as opposed to the standard approach, which is obviously not working, of waiting for a crime to occur and then putting the alleged criminals in jail.

Specifically, the Youth PROMISE Act allows communities facing the greatest youth gang and crime challenges to form a council to include representatives from law enforcement, court services, schools, social service organizations, health and mental health providers and community-based organizations, including faith-based organizations. These councils will then develop a comprehensive plan for implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies that fit the needs of the particular community. These strategies will target young people who are at risk of becoming involved, or who are already involved in, gangs or the criminal justice system and redirect them toward productive and law-abiding alternatives.

[More...](#)

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

Contact your Representative and both your Senators **and URGE THEM TO CO-SPONSOR AND SUPPORT H.R. 3846 – THE YOUTH PROMISE ACT.** To contact your Senators and Representative, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators and your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators'/Congressman's offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:

The Honorable (name of Senator)  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:

The Honorable (name of Representative)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**A SAMPLE  
LETTER IS  
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' or Representative's offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov); click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses. To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov), and click on "*Write Your Representative*" (on the left hand side, just under "find your Representative"). This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

**REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!**

## **THE MESSAGE**

- Incarceration rates in the United States, particularly of African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities, are much higher than in any other country, and costs tax payers \$65 billion a year.
- The "cradle to prison pipeline" that many African American children find themselves in must be stopped, and punitive legislation creating more punishments is not working.
- We need to invest in community-based, proven intervention and prevention strategies to help our youth, our families and our neighborhoods get out of the destructive cycle of gang violence and crime.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!**  
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

**MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.**

To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org)

## Sample Letter

(date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate / House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510 / 20515

### **RE: SUPPORT FOR H.R. 3846, THE YOUTH PROMISE ACT**

Dear Senator / Representative \_\_\_\_\_;

As your constituent, I strongly urge you to co-sponsor and support H.R. 3846, the *Youth PROMISE Act*, introduced by Congressman Robert "Bobby" Scott (VA) on October 16, 2007. This legislation would effectively address the scourge of gang violence that is decimating communities across the Nation and help tens of thousands of youth stay away from gangs and become productive members of our communities.

Rather than focusing on punitive initiatives that have limited results (other than crowding our prisons), Congressman Scott's *Youth PROMISE Act* would build on strengthening community responses to help stop young men and women from joining gangs. Under the *Youth PROMISE Act*, communities facing the greatest youth gang, delinquency and crime challenges will come together to develop and implement a comprehensive plan which addresses that community's unique assets and challenges to support young people and their families. This in turn will make our communities safer, reduce victimization and help at-risk youth become productive members of our communities.

Please contact me in the very near future to let me know what you are doing to address the serious problems facing our communities today as a result of youth violence, and what you believe I can do to help.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and  
remember to include your address)

*Remember to contact your  
Representative and BOTH  
your Senators.*