



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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ACTION ALERT

DATE: April 28, 2009
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, Washington Bureau

NAACP Calls for Swift Enactment of Expanded Hate Crime Prevention Legislation

Legislation is currently scheduled for House floor action tomorrow

The ISSUE:

Hate crimes remain a festering and horrifying problem in the United States. This form of domestic terrorism is designed to intimidate whole communities on the basis of personal and immutable characteristics – and can spark widespread neighborhood conflicts, even damaging the very fabric of our society. Although there are laws on the books that help deter hate crimes and protect their victims, significant gaps remain unfilled. Sadly, the number of hate crimes in America continues to increase, and the number of “hate groups” (an organization that promotes hate or violence towards members of an entire class of people, based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation) in the United States increased to 926 in 2008, up 54% since 2000.

Currently, the federal government is allowed to intervene in the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes only if they occur on federal property or if the victim was participating in one of six very specific activities, such as voting. The “*Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act*” (H.R. 1913, introduced by Congressman John Conyers, MI) would expand existing hate crime prevention laws and allow the federal government to assist the local authorities in the investigation and prosecution of crimes motivated by hate, regardless of where or what the victim was doing at the time the crime occurred. It would also expand the definition of a hate crime to include those motivated by the victim’s disability, gender or sexual orientation and it would provide money to states to develop hate crime prevention programs.

In short, this proposed hate crimes prevention legislation would allow the federal government to work with state and local authorities to prevent or, if necessary, punish hate crimes to the fullest extent possible. States will continue to play the primary role in the prosecution of hate crime violence, however H.R. 1913 will compliment state statutes and assist states in securing the very complicated and expensive cases through prosecution.

H.R. 1913 is scheduled to be considered by the full House of Representatives tomorrow, Wednesday, April 29. We must encourage all of our elected representatives to support this bill and to oppose any weakening amendments.

More

MEMBERSHIP IS POWER! JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.

For more information, call your local NAACP branch or visit www.naacp.org

THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:

Contact your Representative and **URGE HIM / HER TO SUPPORT HATE CRIMES PREVENTION LEGISLATION, H.R. 1913 ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.** To contact your Representative, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

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

✓ **Write a Letter**

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

No time to mail a letter! Call, fax or e-mail today!

• **Send a Fax**

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

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to 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.

THE MESSAGE:

- New hate crimes prevention legislation is a necessary tool to help fight the continuing problem of hate crimes against people because of race, religion, national origin, gender, disability or sexual orientation. It would enhance the federal government's ability to work with state and local authorities to prevent or, if necessary punish hate crimes to the fullest extent possible.
- While states should continue to play the primary role in the prosecution of hate crime violence, federal law is needed to complement state statutes and assist states in seeing these complicated and expensive cases through prosecution.
- Hate Crimes have a profoundly destructive impact not only on the victims, but on entire communities as well.
- Hate crimes continue to plague and terrorize this nation **AND ARE ON THE INCREASE;** congress must pass the *Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act* immediately!

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.

(date)

Sample Letter

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: HATE CRIMES PREVENTION LEGISLATION

Dear Representative _____;

As your constituent and an active member of the NAACP, I would urge you, in the strongest terms possible, to actively support hate crimes prevention legislation, the *Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act* (H.R. 1913), introduced by Congressman John Conyers of Michigan when it comes before you on the floor of the House, and that you oppose any weakening amendments.

This legislation is an important next step in the battle against hate crimes; a battle that must be won if we are going to be able to protect all of our citizens, nation and our democracy.

The *Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act* is a necessary tool to help fight the continuing problem of crimes against people because of race, religion, national origin, gender, disability or sexual orientation. It would allow the federal government to work with state and local authorities to prevent and if necessary punish hate crimes to the fullest extent possible. While states should continue to play the primary role in the prosecution of hate crime violence, a federal law is needed to compliment state statutes and assist states in seeing these complicated and expensive cases through prosecution.

Hate crimes continue to plague and terrorize this nation **AND ARE ON THE INCREASE**. Hate Crimes have a destructive impact not only on the victims, but on entire communities as well. Thus, I hope that you will do all you can to see that this legislation becomes law sooner rather than later. Thank you for your attention to this matter; I look forward to hearing from you as to what you are doing on this matter and what more I can do to help you promote this legislation.

Sincerely,

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