

Recent hate crimes on Long Island and in New York reinforce the urgency for Congressional action on hate crimes bill

Central Islip, NY— Monday, Rep. Steve Israel (D-Huntington), Assemblyman Phil Ramos (D-Brentwood), Suffolk County Legislator Rick Montano (D-Central Islip), and leaders of the Hispanic community, called for a renewed Congressional effort to pass hate crimes legislation.

“It’s time for Congress to get its act together and pass federal hate crimes legislation. On Long Island and around New York, we’ve been struggling to fight hate and discrimination in our communities. Recently, a high school student killed a man in Patchogue because of his ethnicity. The other day an Ecuadorian man was brutally attacked and later died in Brooklyn. In both cases, someone died because of violence sparked by an incomprehensible bias. Today, I’m renewing the call for Congress to act and act fast to pass legislation that will allow for federal prosecution of these horrifying crimes,” Israel said.

"I am grateful to Rep. Israel for his leadership on this critical issue. It is essential that Congress passes modern hate-crime legislation that addresses today's challenges and helps local communities protect every individual's civil rights," Ramos said.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (H.R. 1592) would allow for federal prosecution for all violent crimes based on race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

The bill will provide the Justice Department with the authority to investigate and prosecute bias-motivated violence. Current law does not deem a hate crime as a distinct federal offense. However, the federal government can investigate and prosecute crimes of bias as civil rights violations, which do fall under its jurisdiction. In the 110th Congress, the House passed the bill. The legislation stalled in the Senate and will need to be re-introduced and passed in both the House and the Senate in the 111th Congress before it can become law.

According to an FBI report from October 2008, there were 595 incidents of anti-Hispanic hate crimes in 2007, an increase of 3.3% from the 576 incidents reported in 2006.

According to an annual Hate Crime Statistics Report released jointly by the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2,025 law enforcement agencies reported 7,624 hate crime incidents involving 9,006 offenses in 2007. Additionally, an analysis of the 7,621 single-bias incidents reported in 2007 revealed the following:

- 50.8 percent were racially motivated
- 18.4 percent were motivated by religious bias
- 16.6 percent resulted from sexual-orientation bias
- 13.2 percent stemmed from ethnicity/national origin bias

Rep. Israel serves on the House Appropriations Committee.