

by killing Jews." What kind of message was he sending? A message of hatred.

One year ago yesterday, in Laramie, Wyoming, a young man named Matthew Shepard was killed. The reason? Because he was gay.

In Jasper, Texas, a man was murdered and dragged through the streets because he was an African-American.

All of these incidents are hate crimes. They do not just affect the group that was killed, they affect each and every one of us.

This is especially troubling to me because of the rash of anti-immigrant billboards and posters in my district of late which falsely blame immigrants for all of society's problems. Having spent my entire life in Queens County in New York, I recognize the problems faced on a daily basis by minorities who strive to eliminate any form of discrimination still present in our society. Unfortunately, the billboards of late only tell that discrimination is alive and well.

I believe the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999 is a constructive and measured response to a problem that continues to plague our Nation. Violence motivated by prejudice. This legislation is also needed because many States lack comprehensive hate crime laws.

I understand there are some people who believe that hate should not be an issue when prosecuting a crime. They say our laws already punish the criminal act and that our laws are strong enough as is. I answer with the most recent figures from 1997, when 8,049 hate crimes were reported in the United States, 8,049 crimes, because of hate. According to the FBI, hate crimes are underreported. So the actual figure is much, much higher.

I say to my colleagues, penalties for committing a murder are increased if the murder happens during the commission of a crime. Murdering a police officer is considered first degree murder, even if there was no premeditation. Committing armed robbery carries a higher punishment than petty larceny. There are degrees to crimes. Local governments and State governments and the Federal Government recognize that. And committing a crime against someone because of their race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity or other group should warrant a different penalty. These crimes are designed to send a message, "We don't like your kind and here is what we're going to do about it." So why can we not punish crimes motivated by hate differently than other crimes?

Mr. Speaker, this legislation does not punish free speech as some have contended. Nowhere does it say you cannot hold a certain political belief or view or a particular philosophy. What it does say is that if you commit a violent act because of those beliefs, you will be punished and punished differently.

Hate crime laws are also constitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court's rul-

ing in *Wisconsin v. Mitchell* unanimously upheld a Wisconsin statute which gave enhanced sentences to a defendant who intentionally selects a victim because of the person's race, religion, color, disability, sexual orientation, sex or nation of origin.

I believe we ought to stand up as a Congress and as a country to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act to make our laws tougher for the people who carry out these heinous crimes.

The Senate has already included it as part of the fiscal year 2000 Commerce-Justice-State appropriations bill. I would urge the House conferees to recede to the Senate on this section. At the very least, H.R. 1082 should be brought to the House floor for consideration. We must end the hate that is permeating our society.

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PERIODIC REPORT ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS PAYMENTS PURSUANT TO TREASURY DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC LICENSES—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, without objection, referred to the Committee on International Relations:

To the Congress of the United States:

As required by section 1705(e)(6) of the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, 22 U.S.C. 6004(e)(6), as amended by section 102(g) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996, Public Law 104-114, 110 Stat. 785, I transmit herewith a semiannual report "detailing payments made to Cuba . . . as a result of the provision of telecommunications services" pursuant to Department of the Treasury specific licenses.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON.

THE WHITE HOUSE, October 13, 1999.

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IN SUPPORT OF HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CUMMINGS. Mr. Speaker, under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, Congress has defined a hate crime as "any act of violence against a person or property based on the victim's race, color, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability."

I am here today, Mr. Speaker, to talk about the victims of hate crimes that provide a real-life definition.

James Byrd, Jr., an African-American male victim, chained to the back of a pickup truck and dragged along a dirt road, murdered by supporters of a white supremacist organization.

Thanh Mai, a Vietnamese-American victim who died from a split skull after

being taunted and called a "gook" and struck to a cement floor.

A Latino-American family victimized by arsonists who burned down their home after spray-painting racist messages on the walls.

Women in Massachusetts victimized by a sexual batterer who was found to have violated the State's hate crime law for his biased crimes against women.

Jewish children victimized by shootings at their community center by a man who had connections to an anti-Semitic organization.

And today, we remember Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old college student who was brutally and savagely beaten, strapped to a fence like an animal and left to die, all because of his sexual orientation.

These are only a few of the human faces that fell victim to intolerance, bias and bigotry. In fact, FBI statistics reveal that in 1997, a total of 8,049 biased motivated criminal incidents were reported. Of these incidents, 4,700 were motivated by racial bias, 1,400 by religious bias, 1,100 by sexual-orientation bias, 800 by ethnicity/national origin bias, and 12 by disability bias.

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The number of incidents reported in my home State of Maryland was 335.

As we discuss this issue, I believe that there are two questions our Nation must answer: First, why should we care?

I submit to my colleagues today that we should care because our Nation was built on a foundation of democracy and independence for all. Our Declaration of Independence states that we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We all take pride in these words, Mr. Speaker, but we all have a duty as American people to recognize this principle applies to all of our Nation's citizens regardless of their race or national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability status.

As cosponsor of the Celebrating One America resolution that this House passed today by unanimous consent sponsored by my good friend from New York (Mr. RANGEL), I believe that we should reach out across our differences in ethnicity, race and religion to respect each other and to celebrate in friendship our unity and one America. We must all remember that although we are a melting pot of various cultures, ideals and physical make-ups, we are all one human race.

As one 16 year-old recently wrote:
 "He prayed, it wasn't my religion;
 He ate, it wasn't what I ate;
 He spoke, it wasn't my language;
 He dressed, it wasn't what I wore;
 He took my hand, it wasn't the color of mine;

But when he laughed, it was how I laugh, and when he cried, it was how I cry."