

**Letter to the Speaker of the House  
of Representatives on the Proposed  
“Hate Crimes Prevention Act”**

July 12, 2000

Dear Mr. Speaker:

I write to urge you to bring the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA) to the floor for a vote before the August recess. Last month, the Senate, in a strong bipartisan showing, voted overwhelmingly to pass this legislation that would strengthen federal hate crimes law. As the Senate vote demonstrates, passing hate crimes legislation is not a partisan issue. It is a national concern requiring a national response. Now it is time for the House to do its part to ensure that strong hate crimes legislation becomes law this year.

Since this legislation was introduced in November 1997, our country has witnessed countless acts of bigotry and hatred. In June 1998, James Byrd, Jr., an African-American man, was brutally dragged to his death. In October of that year, Mathew Shepard, a gay college student, died after being beaten and tied to a fence. In July 1999, Benjamin Smith went on a racially motivated shooting spree in Illinois and Indiana. At the end of this hate-fueled rampage, Ricky Byrdson, an African-American who was former basketball coach at Northwestern University, and Won-Joon Yoon, a Korean graduate student at Indiana University, were killed, and eight others were wounded. In August 1999, Joseph Iletto, a native of the Philippines and U.S. postal worker, died at the hands of a gunman in Los Angeles. This same gunman also injured five persons, including three children, at a Jewish community center. Finally, this year there were two killing rampages in Pennsylvania. In March, an African-American man shot and killed three white men. In April, another man murdered an African-American man, a Jewish woman, two Asian-American men, and an Indian man. We must take action now to stop these acts of violence.

This legislation is absolutely necessary because hate crimes are fundamentally different from other crimes. Victims are targeted simply because of who they are—whether it is race, color, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or gender. These acts of

violence affect entire communities, not just the individual victims. This legislation would provide more tools to State and local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute hate crimes. It would also expand protection to include hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender, or disability.

I ask the House of Representatives to follow the bipartisan example of the Senate by passing hate crimes legislation before the August recess. We must send a message that hate crimes will not be tolerated, and that one more hate crime is one too many.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

**Remarks to the NAACP National  
Convention in Baltimore, Maryland**

July 13, 2000

Well, let me say it's good to see you. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. Thank you, Julian; thank you, Kweisi. Thank you, Myrlie Evers-Williams, Ben Hooks, Elaine Jones, the whole board. Thank you, Wendell Anthony, for letting me come to Detroit to the biggest dinner in the history of the world.

I know I had dinner with Wendell in Detroit with over 10,000 people, because he told me so, but I couldn't even see the people at the other head table, it was so big. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, Mayor O'Malley, for welcoming us to Baltimore and for being such a great leader. Thank you, Representative Elijah Cummings, for representing Baltimore so well. And thank you, Mayor John Street, for representing Philadelphia so well and making it true to the Founders' dreams.

I have, I know, oh, a dozen or more members of the White House staff here, but I would like to mention a few: Thurgood Marshall, Jr., whose father was a native of Baltimore; my chief speechwriter, Terry Edmonds, a Baltimore native. I thank Mark Lindsay; Mary Beth Cahill; Ben Johnson, who runs our One America office; my political director, Minyon Moore; Janis Kearney; Broderick Johnson, a Baltimore native;