

January 11, 2009

## **ACTION ALERT-ACT TODAY**

### **Protect Homeless Americans from Hate-Motivated Violence**

### **KEY VOTE SCHEDULED IN SENATE COMMITTEE**

**ACTION REQUESTED:** The National Coalition for the Homeless urges homeless people, advocates, service providers, and other concerned Americans to contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives and encourage them to co-sponsor the *Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act* (S. 1765, H.R. 3419).

In particular advocates in the following states: AL, AZ, CA, CO, DE, FL, GA, IA, IL, MA, MD, MI, MN, MS, NC, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WI should contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives serving on the Senate and House Judiciary Committees and ask them to co-sponsor the *Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act* (S. 1765, H.R. 3419).

**ISSUE STATUS:** Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX), Robert Wexler (D-FL) and twelve other U.S. Representatives introduced the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (H.R. 3419) on July 30<sup>h</sup>, 2009. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) and Susan M. Collins (R-ME) introduced the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (S. 1765) on October 8, 2009. The Hate Crimes in the Homeless Statistics Act will add homeless people to the federal hate crimes statistics statute. The next procedural step in the process is to have Senate and House Judiciary Committees hold hearings on the legislation.

NCH encourages homeless people, advocates, service providers and other concerned citizens to call Senators and Representatives on the Judiciary Committees and urge them to co-sponsor S. 1765 and H.R. 3419.

#### **INSTRUCTIONS:**

- Call your Senators and Representatives and encourage them to co-sponsor the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (S. 1765, H.R. 3419).
- Call the United States Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Senator's or Representative's office.
- Inform the receptionist that you would like to speak with the Judiciary Legislative Assistant to make a request about hate crimes legislation.
- The receptionist will transfer you to that person or his/her voicemail box. Whether you are speaking live or leaving a message, you are invited to use this text as a call script:

“Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_ and I live in [your hometown and state]. I am calling to urge the Senator/Representative to take action to include homeless people in federal hate crimes statistics statutes. Specifically, I urge the Senator/Representative to co-sponsor the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (S. 1765, H.R. 3419).

The Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act is important legislation to monitor hate crimes against homeless people. Unfortunately, current legislation does not monitor crimes against people experiencing homelessness, a population group of victims that is also experiencing a pattern of intentional bias-based selection.

*\*\*\* If you are aware of a recent attack against a homeless person in your home state, please share this information with your Senator.*

I look forward to learning the Senator's/Representative's decision on this request. I may be reached at XXX. Thank you."

- Follow the phone call with a fax letter to the Senator/Representative.
- Also, please add your national, state, or local organization to a sign-on letter to Senator Cardin expressing your organization's support for the legislation. To view the sign on letter, please visit: [www.nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/HCAHSA\\_SignOnLetter-0709.pdf](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/HCAHSA_SignOnLetter-0709.pdf). To join the sign-on letter, please send you organization name and contact information to [cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org).

## **BACKGROUND:**

"Hate crimes" are criminal offenses committed against a person, property, or society which are motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a certain class of people. In many cases, perpetrators of hate crimes do not know their victims personally and they do not seek material gain or vengeance; their actions are intended only to intimidate or dehumanize. The damage done by hate crimes cannot be measured solely in terms of physical injury or dollars and cents; hate crimes leave a special emotional and psychological mark on victims and their communities, leaving them feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law.

Since 1999, the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty have documented over 700 unprovoked violent attacks against homeless individuals, with over 200 of those attacks resulting in death. These attacks ranged from beating a victim with a golf club to dousing a sleeping man with gasoline and setting him on fire. Victims included men and women, veterans, children as young as four, youth, and elders. Though these statistics are troubling, they do not represent the full extent of the problem, as countless acts of violence against the homeless go unnoticed or unreported.

## **ACTION RESOURCES:**

- To read the latest report on hate crimes against homeless people, visit: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/getinvolved/projects/hatecrimes/index.html>
- To read an NCH Public Policy Recommendation on Homeless Hate Crimes Legislation, visit: <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/2009Policy/Hate%20Crimes.pdf>

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:** Charles Bontrager, NCH Policy Advocate,  
[cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org) or 202.462.4822.