

Support the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (S. 1105) Amendment

September 27, 2007

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the more than 100,000 bipartisan members of the American Association of University Women, we urge you to **support the cloture motion and the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (S. 1105) amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 1585)**. This critical piece of legislation will provide local police and sheriff's departments with vital federal resources to address hate violence. Hate crimes are serious, well-documented problems that remain inadequately prosecuted and recognized. Through this legislation, AAUW urges Congress to send a clear signal that hate-motivated violence carried out against any individual will not be tolerated.

While current law covers hate crimes motivated by a person's race, color, religion, or national origin, it is only applicable if the crime is committed while the victim is engaged in specific activities, such as serving on a jury, attending public school, applying for employment, or voting. As a result, the federal law does not reach many cases where individuals, motivated by hate, kill or injure others.

This important bill would strengthen the federal response to hate crimes by giving the U.S. Department of Justice the power to investigate and prosecute bias motivated violence where the perpetrator has selected the victim because of the person's actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability. AAUW believes that while states should continue to play the primary role in the prosecution of hate crime violence, the federal government must be able to address cases that local authorities are either unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute. The measure also provides grants to state and local communities to combat violent crimes committed by juveniles, train law enforcement officers, or to assist in state and local investigations and prosecutions of bias motivated crimes.

Once again, AAUW urges you to **support the cloture motion and the Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (S. 1105) amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 1585)**. If you have any questions, please contact me at 202/785-7793, or Tracy Sherman, government relations manager, at 202/785-7730. Votes associated with these issues may be included in the AAUW Congressional Voting Record for the 110th Congress.

Sincerely,



Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

