

April 19, 2007

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
2426 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Conyers:

In advance of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hearing on HR 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007, and on behalf of the Texas Police Chiefs Association (TPCA), I am writing to express our strong support for the bill. This legislation would enhance the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes, by allowing the federal government to provide technical support to state and local law enforcement agencies responding to such crimes. It also would authorize the Department of Justice to provide grants to state and local law enforcement agencies to cover the costs of investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.

Most hate crimes are, and should continue to be, investigated by state and local authorities. The Harris County Sheriff's department investigated a particularly horrible hate crime last year, when a Spring teenager named David Ritcheson was beaten nearly to death and sodomized with an outdoor umbrella pole by two other teenagers who attacked him because of his Hispanic heritage. I understand David will be testifying before your hearing. In David's case, investigators and prosecutors responded quickly and effectively, and the perpetrators of the crime were brought to justice. Unfortunately, however, there are instances where as the result of insufficient resources or a lack of jurisdiction, local authorities cannot properly investigate hate crimes. This legislation would provide the Department of Justice with jurisdiction in crimes of violence which are motivated because of an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, disability, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation.

We urge you to pass the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act. It would greatly assist state and local law enforcement agencies in investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.

Sincerely,



Chief Randall Freeman
Henderson, Texas Police Department
President, Texas Police Chiefs Association