

Hate Crimes Prevention Act Passes Congress

The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act has passed both chambers of Congress, and is on its way to the President for his signature.

It has taken over ten years for this major piece of legislation to pass both houses of Congress. Here are some quick facts on the legislation:

- It expands current federal hate crimes laws to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.
- It would remove the current requirement under federal hate crimes law that a victim had to be engaging in a federally-protected activity (such as voting) in order for the claim to be investigated and prosecuted.
- It would give federal law enforcement greater authority to engage in investigations of hate crimes, even where local law enforcement does not have the resources to do so.
- It would expand data tracking on hate crimes by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"The legislation will certainly have an effect on South Asians who have been and continue to be victims of hate crimes," noted Deepa Iyer, Executive Director of SAALT. "In the wake of September 11, 2001, we saw a rise in [hate crimes affecting South Asians](#); yet, many of those incidents could not be investigated or prosecuted due to limitations in current federal hate crimes law. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act will create additional resources and avenues for victims of hate crimes to seek justice. We look forward to President Obama signing this measure into law."

For further information about the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act and its impact on South Asian communities, please contact SAALT at saalt@saalt.org or 301.270.1855.



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Communities in America