

ADL Pushes Legislation That May Threaten Talk Show Hosts and Free Speech

Talk Show Hosts May Be Accomplices Under Hate Bill

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The [Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act](#) which has passed the House of Representatives by an overwhelming margin is now facing hearings in the Senate. There are already similar hate crime laws in place; however, this bill imposes much stronger federal enforcement, which is a clear violation of the Tenth Amendment. It grants greater power to federal prosecutors to prosecute hate crime laws by prosecuting those who have been found innocent by local or state courts. The current bill will extend special privileges to gays and transgender individuals that are currently only granted to ethnic and religious minorities. The most dangerous part of the Bill which is a direct assault against the First Amendment is that it allows for the prosecution as accomplices in a hate crime for talk show pundits that the person who commits the alleged crime claims to influence their actions.

Here is the essential text:

Whoever transmits in interstate or foreign commerce [radio, TV, internet] any communication, with the intent to coerce, intimidate, harass, or cause substantial emotional distress to a person, using electronic means to support severe, repeated, and hostile behavior, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than two years, or both. (HR 1966, SEC 3, Sec. 881a)

Reverend Ted Pike of the National Prayer Network says that “this means that if any pastor, talk show host or guest, or anyone communicating on radio or the internet is repeatedly “hostile” to the practice of homosexuality and “intends” to cause “substantial emotional distress” in homosexuals, leading to repentance, he is guilty. The speaker doesn’t even have to succeed in causing such conviction for sin, even though he will be especially guilty if he does. In either case, the federal government is empowered under this bill to invade any state to prosecute the “bully” of the airwaves.”

This Bill is the first major step to stripping away our rights to freedom of speech in the 1st amendment. Recently the Plains State ADL Director denounced the 1st Amendment

by saying that “freedom of speech does not extend to racist groups, nor give their supporters the right to threaten and intimidate others or commit acts of violence.” In many western nations, an individual can be prosecuted by the government for certain speech.

Though we still have the First Amendment we are headed in that direction of Europe and Canada where people can be prosecuted for thought crimes. Organizations such as the Southern Poverty Law Center and Anti-Defamation League have aggressively promoted hate crime legislation. These organizations have endorsed Europe and Canada’s policies on prosecuting what they deem as hate speech. The ADL openly advocates for their model anti-hate law. In 1988 the ADL gave out an award to law student Joseph Ribikoff for writing a proposed hate crime bill that would criminalize hate speech against gays and minorities.

In testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, ADL Washington counsel Michael Lieberman spoke in support of the Hate Crimes Bill. “We have no illusions about this legislation,” Lieberman testified. “We know that bigotry, racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism cannot be legislated out of existence. A new federal law that finally addresses all victims of hate crimes will not eliminate them.”

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Organizations Supporting S.909

- Anti-Defamation League
- American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee
- National Youth Advocacy Coalition
- National Center for Transgender Equality
- National Black Justice Coalition
- Civil Rights Coalition
- National Council of La Raza
- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
- Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism
- American Association of People with Disabilities
- National Sheriffs' Association
- Matthew Shepard Foundation
- Human Rights Campaign
- Log Cabin Republicans
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- American Civil Liberties Union