

FRC: Hate Crimes Bill to be Slipped into Defense Budget

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Leaders in the U.S. House plan to slip the hate crimes bill into the 2010 Defense Authorization bill that could be voted on as early as Thursday, a conservative public policy organization warned.

In a move similar to the Senate, the House leadership reportedly wants to add the difficult-to-pass amendment to the high priority defense budget, according to Family Research Council.

The bill would expand federal hate crimes to include violence against individuals based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability. Current federal law covers crimes committed on the basis of race, religion, color or national origin.

Many pastors and Christian leaders have rallied against the hate crimes bill, saying it would restrict their right to free speech and religious freedom. They emphasized that while everyone – regardless of their sexual orientation – deserves to be protected from violence, the bill would be one step on “a slippery slope toward religious [persecution](#).”

They cite cases involving hate crimes laws in other countries which have been used to put pastors and Christians in prison for speaking against [homosexuality](#) as a sin.

Critics also argue that state laws already exists that guarantee protection for the people the hate crimes bill seeks to protect.

“I know it is not politically correct to say that certain lifestyles are not condoned by the Bible, but in this day those of us who are leaders in the faith community got to make a choice to be biblically correct or politically correct,” said Bishop Harry R. Jackson, Jr., pastor of Hope Christian Church in Maryland, at an anti-hate crimes bill press conference on Capitol Hill earlier this year. “And I believe if we are biblically correct we will impact the nation.”

However, some evangelical leaders have publicly voiced support for the bill, including Jim Wallis, president of the progressive ministry Sojourners, and Dr. Joel C. Hunter, senior pastor of Northland – A Church Distributed in Florida.

In an earlier statement, Hunter said, “I would think that the followers of Jesus would be first in line to protect any group from hate crimes.”

“This bill protects both the rights of conservative religious people to voice passionately their interpretations of their scriptures and protects their fellow citizens from physical attack” he said.

In 2007 under the George W. Bush administration, a similar hate crimes bill was passed by the House. The Senate then passed the legislation as part of a defense spending bill. But House and Senate negotiators decided to strip the provision from the bill after concluding that it lacked the necessary votes to pass in the House.

This year, the Senate voted to attach the hate crimes bill to its version of the 2010 defense spending bill. The hate crimes bill is supported by the Democrat-controlled House and President Obama.

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