

National Organization for Women

Kim Gandy
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Dear Senator:

The National Organization for Women, representing more than 500,000 contributing members across the country with many in your state, supports the **Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 (S. 1105)**. This important civil rights legislation, introduced by Senators Kennedy (D-Mass) and Smith (R-Ore), is intended to prevent and prosecute criminal acts of hate violence.

The House has passed its version of the bill and the Senate may well be discussing and voting on S. 1105 sometime in the days ahead. Thank you to the many Senators who are sponsors of this bill. **We hope that the entire Senate will support this bi-partisan legislation when it comes before them this fall.**

Congress has spent more than a decade reviewing and debating this legislation and the Senate has discussed and passed this proposal before, but to no avail. **We cannot continue to delay the passage of this important federal civil rights legislation. People's safety and lives are at stake.**

Passage of this critical legislation is especially important for the girls and women of this nation. Women who have survived hateful sexual violence know how vicious crimes of hate can affect our lives. We know that hate crimes are more than individual assaults – they send shock waves and fear throughout a whole community and segments of our diverse population and the message is: “know your place” and “you are not welcome here.” Girls’ and women’s lives are restricted and often ruined by the fear as well as the reality of hate crimes, be they based on our religion, race, gender identity or just because we are women.

We ask you to be a leader who shares with us the vision that everyone should be free from hate violence, regardless of their race, religion, national origin or if they are women, people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The Matthew Shepard Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 is an important first step in protecting individuals who are perceived as vulnerable or targets of hatred and in making our homes, streets, schools and communities safe. Please support this bill when it comes before you in the near future and feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns about the importance of including gender and gender identity in the legislation.

Sincerely,

Kim Gandy