

Harry R. Jackson, Jr.
Remarks at Press Conference Urging Defeat of H.R. 1592

We are here today to oppose the proceeding--or the law--1592, Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007, and our position is that this legislation is indefinable, constitutionally suspect, unfair, un-American and unnecessary.

I stand here today representing clergy and people of faith from the Christian community who are making a stand for religious liberty. Behind me we have a group that's predominantly African-American, and this represents a landmark transition that's going on in our nation. In fact, what is going on is that there is an amalgamation--a coming together--of the black church, if you would, and the white church against this kind of legislation. But the people who are gathering today to talk about this bill are saying that there is a sympathy to blacks behind why this bill was generated--a sympathy to the black church, even. But, actually, this particular bill--hate crimes legislation--actually dishonors the black church, specifically, from which the Civil Rights Movement was birthed. It does not honor blacks, it does not help people who are of a religious persuasion. In fact, it will muzzle us and keep us from being the conscience to America that God has intended us be. This legislation has been endorsed by the NAACP, by other black leadership in high-ranking, kind of official, capacity. But, unfortunately, many of the forerunners of the Civil Rights Movement in the early days are now out-of-touch with what is going on. They are not moving in step with the real grassroots of the black community. So we have a limited number of autonomous, self-appointed leaders who are standing to speak inappropriately for the black community.

Now let me talk a little bit about this particular legislation very briefly. This legislation will grant protected status to sexual orientation and gender identity. Further, it will mandate what we believe is un-equal protection under the law and pave the way for a kind of criminalization, if you will, of our religious beliefs and any ideas that are contrary to the political beliefs that are politically correct as some would deem them. Some of the laws of an anti-Christian bias have been put into place around the world. I cite in Sweden Pastor Akis Greens was indicted, convicted and sentenced to 30 days in jail for a hate crime violation. We find that, in Sweden, the laws are very, very strict. He simply read from his Bible Old Testament passages and nobody was assaulted, no violence occurred, no riots took place. But, yet and still, he spent 30 days in jail. The *Washington Post* has carried articles about this.

In Australia, two evangelical pastors were charged with violating the state of Victoria's hate crime laws. They were criticizing Islam and the idea of the press, and also the idea of law enforcement. And, ultimately, the people who were speaking in a Christian context were not allowed to voice their beliefs according to how they read the word of God.

In Canada, recently, we find a Catholic city councillor was fined \$1000 for simply restating the doctrines and beliefs of the Catholic Church and he was called up, if you will, on hate crimes--hate speech.

As I think of the concept of hate crimes in the past, hate legislation in the past, we must remember that the judicial system in the past, during the days of the Civil Rights Movement, stood against fairness under the law for blacks. I believe the problem in the past was that law enforcement people did not enforce the laws. They did not treat black people with respect. No matter what the law said, they were not going to get a fair shake. The contrast is happening in America. Gays are getting deference and they are getting preference and we find the courts are overthrowing and overturning laws and making rulings that are, in our view, unfair. So the religious liberties battle of our day is very important and the black church stands to lose the most. We cannot be muzzled.

I conclude my statements by saying this: The hate crimes legislation that we're talking about today is bigger than any concerns we have about the gay movement per se. This is not an anti-gay rally. The question that we must ask ourselves is, "Isn't freedom of speech a major value to our nation?" The second major question we must ask is, "Do we want an America where no one can express their true religious beliefs?" Pro-abortion's advocates would say, "Keep your hands off my reproductive organs!" Pro-gays shout, "Stay out of our bedrooms!" Christian ministers can rightfully say, "Stay out of our pulpit!"