

From the Offices of:  
SENATOR WALTER F. MONDALE (D-MINN.)  
SENATOR EDWARD M. BROOKE (R-MASS.)

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Senators Walter F. Mondale (D-Minn.) and Edward M. Brooke (R-Mass.) today initiated a bi-partisan effort to enact a national Fair Housing law this year.

Citing the gravity of the urban crisis, Mondale and Brooke introduced S. 1358, the Fair Housing bill, as an amendment to H.R. 2516, the civil rights worker protection bill, which is currently before the Senate.

The two Senators said this is probably the only opportunity there will be for consideration of Fair Housing legislation this year. The measure, which outlaws discrimination in the sale or rental of housing, has been pending before the Senate Banking and Currency Committee where hearings were held on it last August. However, there will not be time for the committee to act on the bill in time for it to be considered and acted upon during the present civil rights debate, they said.

Both Senators are members of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee. Mondale is chief Senate sponsor of the Fair Housing bill while Brooke is one of the Republican co-sponsors of the measure. Brooke is also a member of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders which Mondale and Senator Fred Harris (D-Okla.) proposed following last summer's urban riots.

In separate Senate speeches, Mondale and Brooke both stressed the need for immediate Congressional action on fair housing.

"The barriers of housing discrimination stifle hope and achievement and promote rage and despair," Mondale said. "They tell the Negro citizen trapped in an urban slum that there is no escape, that even were he able to get a decent education and a good job, he would still not have the freedom other Americans enjoy to choose where he and his family will live."

"Outlawing discrimination in the sale or rental of housing will not free those trapped in ghetto squalor," Mondale added,  
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"but it is an absolutely essential first step which must be taken -- and taken soon. For Fair Housing legislation is basic to any solution of our present urban crisis."

Mondale also noted that "our continuing failure to put an end to segregated housing lends a powerful argument to the black separatists and black racists, and can only speed the process of separation and alienation. It will insure two separate Americas constantly at war with one another, increasingly unable to come to terms on any issue."

Brooke commented that fair housing is not "a panacea or anything approaching it. But nothing is so essential to breaking the dreary cycle of middle class exodus to the suburbs and rapid deterioration of our central cities."

Brooke also noted that progress in fair housing would help "moderate our difficulties in other critical areas such as education and employment."

Mondale also noted evidence of changing attitudes toward fair housing, both on the part of the public and the real estate industry

Of the 22 state fair housing laws presently in existence, he said, five were newly enacted and four were strengthened within the past year. And of the 84 county and city open housing ordinances now on the books, 43 -- better than half -- were passed within the past year. "Most of these laws and ordinances have serious shortcomings in coverage and enforcement," Mondale said, "but they are all important in that they indicate a growing recognition of the need to deal with this serious problem."

Six other members of the Senate Banking and Currency Committee joined Mondale and Brooke in offering the Fair Housing bill as an amendment. They are Senators Proxmire (D-Wis.), Muskie (D-Maine), Williams (D-N.J.), Long (D-Mo.), McGee (D-Wyo.), and Percy (R-Ill.). The eight constitute a majority of the Banking and Currency Committee.

A total of 22 Senators sponsored the Fair Housing bill when it was introduced last year. Democratic sponsors, in addition to Mondale, are: Brewster and Tydings of Maryland, Clark of Pennsylvania, Dodd of Connecticut, Gruening of Alaska, Hartke of Indiana, Hart of Michigan, Inouye of Hawaii, Kennedy of Massachusetts, Kennedy of New York, Long of Missouri, McCarthy of Minnesota, Pastore of Rhode Island, Randolph of West Virginia, Williams of New Jersey, and Young of Ohio. Republican sponsors, in addition to Brooke, are: Case of New Jersey, Fong of Hawaii, Javits of New York, and Scott of Pennsylvania.