

# CONGRESSMAN JOHN CONYERS, JR.

1/31  
intg

First District, Michigan

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, June 27, 1989

CONTACT: Cedric R. Hendricks  
(202) 225-5051

## HOUSE APPROVES HATE CRIME STATISTICS ACT AS CONYERS DEFEATS EFFORTS TO NARROW THE BILLS SCOPE

Washington, D.C. - The House of Representatives today approved H.R. 1048, the Hate Crime Statistics Act, a bill authored by Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D-Michigan), Chairman of the House Committee on Government Operations. H.R. 1048 requires the Department of Justice to collect and publish statistics on the nationwide incidence of hate crimes -- those crimes motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, homosexuality or heterosexuality, or ethnicity. The bill was approved by an overwhelming vote of 368 to 47. Congressman Conyers issued the following statement on the House's action:

"The fact that the House has passed this measure during three separate Congresses is a clear indication that the time for its enactment has arrived. Since the Hate Crime Statistics Act was first introduced in 1985, I have seen the support for it continue to grow. Law enforcement organizations which first questioned the merit of the bill, now support it. Members who previously opposed the bill, now support it. Even the Department of Justice, which tried in the past to weaken its provisions, now supports it. This has been accomplished, in large part, due to the hard work of a national coalition of civil and human rights groups, and law enforcement officials, who worked with me to defeat efforts to narrow the bills scope by eliminating coverage of anti-gay violence and harassment.

"During my term as chairman of the Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, my staff and I received information from a variety of sources which indicated that there has been a constant increase in physical and psychological attacks on persons targeted simply because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. We conducted a series of five hearings from 1985 through 1988 that document the need for this legislation in its present form. Testimony was received that hate crimes are both the spontaneous acts of non-affiliated individuals, as well as being actions planned and carried out by organized groups like the Skinheads, the Aryan Nation, and The Order. These attacks have the effect of intimidating not just their victims, but of spreading fear throughout an entire community of people. The fact that these offenses still continue to happen at all in America is an indication that the democratic values that we take great pride in, and which distinguish our society among the community of nations, are not yet shared by all of our citizens.

"In my own state of Michigan, we still see such things as cross burnings occurring. This past March, a six foot cross was burned in the back yard of Charles Wilder, a resident of Temperance -- located about 55 miles southwest of Detroit. Crosses were also burned on the lawn of a family in Jones, Michigan during December 1988, and in Redford Township and Livonia in August 1987. These incidents are not at all fading images of our segregationist past. There have also been an increasing number of racial incidents on our state's college campuses this year. These are particularly disturbing because they indicate that many of our youth are still growing up afflicted with the scourge of bigotry. This past February, racial threats were reported against African American students at Michigan State University, Eastern Michigan University, and Albion College. Unless we act now, this problem will continue to plague us well into the future.

"At present, nine states (Maryland, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Virginia, Maine, and Idaho) and a few local governments monitor the incidence of hate crimes. As the result, there is still much about the nature and scope of this problem that we do not know such as: whether some parts of the country experiencing more hate crimes than others, or are there patterns evident in the background of the perpetrators and victims? I believe that such information would be of great value to law enforcement personal and legislators concerned about the eradication of this problem. With the enactment of hate crimes statistics legislation, the answers to these questions can easily be obtained.

"Hate crimes are extraordinary in nature and require a special governmental response. By devoting Federal resources to the collection of information about this problem, the Congress will demonstrate that it is concerned about the threat that racism and bigotry pose to the peace and harmony of our communities, and is willing to take effective steps to address it."