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We Hate Hate, but Love Free Speech

On Wednesday, April 29th, the House of Representatives voted and passed a bill which will threaten the religious liberty and free speech that Americans have enjoyed for well over 200 years. “The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009” (H.R. 1913) passed with a final vote of 249-175, and was not voted by party lines, with some Democrats opposing and some Republicans favoring.

Hate crimes, also known as “thought crimes,” protects homosexuals from crimes committed against them based on their preferred sexual orientation. This bill creates an entirely separated protected class for homosexuals, which [violates the Constitution’s 14th Amendment](#) of equal protection under the law. According to this bill, if a person commits an act of violence motivated by hate, that person will be convicted of not only the intent of an act of violence, but also be convicted of their motive of “hatred” as well. According to Phyllis Schlafly, Founder and president of Eagle Forum, “All violent crimes are hate crimes and all violent criminals should be severely punished. As we would all like to see an end to bigotry and hate in our society, elevating particular groups of victims and awarding them a special status is not the answer to decreasing crime in America.”

A major concern for many is the direct impact this will have on freedom of speech and religious liberty. While the bill ‘addresses’ this issue by stating that if there are any discrepancies between any constitutional right, meaning freedom of speech and religious freedom, and this piece of legislation, the Constitutional right will be acknowledged in court.

In a [press conference](#) on Tuesday, April 28, Rep. Louie Gohmert (R-TX) explained the problems this creates: “A minister, rabbi, or imam might preach that homosexuality is wrong and leads to the ultimate destruction of moral society. Perhaps one might even quote language in sacred writing saying homosexuality is an “abomination.” Then some nut who hears such preaching goes out and shoots a homosexual. When arrested, the mental defective says that the teaching of the minister/rabbi/imam is what ‘induced’ him into committing the act. The minister/rabbi/imam could be argued to have induced the shooter. It raises a fact question that a prosecutor could demand be submitted to the jury at the religious leader’s trial.”

Also at the press conference were other organizations, including AACS, who spoke on their concerns of the bill. Maureen Wiebe, Legislative Director of AACS, explained, “Since the inception of our country, religious people have flourished in America. Ironically, if hate crimes legislation were to pass, people of all religious persuasions could be discriminated against for following the dictates of their respective faiths. . . . The schools and ministries in AACS are committed to teaching children to respect and value others regardless of any differences. But more important than that is the opportunity to teach according to the dictates of our faith, a privilege and freedom afforded all Americans by the First Amendment of the Constitution.”

When the bill came up for the final vote this week, the Republican Leadership offered a Motion to Recommit which would have included police officers, armed forces, and senior citizens in the list of those protected in the legislation. This was also voted down. In addition, during the mark-up of the bill in the Judiciary Committee last week, 18 Amendments were offered by the Republicans, [all of them debated and voted down](#). Among the amendments were proposals to include pregnant women, veterans, police officers and others to the “protected class” of victims against hate crimes. Another amendment offered the removal of pedophiles from the protected class as “pedophilia” is included in the definition of “sexual orientation”; this was voted down as well. So,

ironically, this bill allows pedophiles to be protected from a hate crime, but does not protect pregnant women, a clear indication that this bill was driven solely for one purpose: to further the homosexual agenda.

The fight continues now in the Senate as Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) this week introduced the Senate version of the bill. Believed to be moving rapidly, AACS along with other organizations will be standing up to stop the passage of this unconstitutional threat to American freedom of speech and religious Liberty.

ACTION: We encourage you to contact your Senators and ask them to OPPOSE S.909. Contact information can be obtained at www.senate.com.

What Republicans are seeking in Education

On April 27, 2009, the AACS Legislative Office attended a forum hosted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute titled, "What Should Republicans Seek in Education (With an Emphasis on the Federal Role)." The panel consisted of Republican Senators Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Jim DeMint of South Carolina along with Republican Congressman Mike Castle of Delaware. Chester E. Finn, President of the TBF Institute, moderated the panel after giving a brief look at the education philosophies debated today. In a [letter](#) Mr. Finn sent to President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, he outlined the three common "groups" that push certain educational agendas:

- ***The System Defenders:*** *This camp believes that the public education system is fundamentally sound but needs additional resources in order to be more effective.*
- ***The Army of the Potomac:*** *This camp holds generally sound instincts about reform, but suffers from a boundless faith in Washington's ability to accomplish significant positive change in K-12 education.*
- ***The Local Controllers:*** *This camp wants Uncle Sam, for the most part, to butt out of K-12 education- but keep sending the money*

Mr. Finn then offered an alternative to all three approaches entitled, "Reform Realism." This agenda is to reform and "provide flexible dollars for disadvantaged children, while fostering the development of common standards and tests and offering cash incentives to states or districts that want to embark upon promising but politically treacherous reforms." Its agenda is to also rid the government from "oversight of state testing and reporting systems, mandated school sanctions, and dictates on teacher credentials." According to Mr. Finn's proposal, school choice, charter schools, and tax-credits would all be major proponents.

So what do the Republican's plan to do with this proposal? While all Republicans voted against and were not "for" the President's stimulus package which would have designated millions to education, what exactly are Republicans "for" when it comes to this issue of education? All three Republicans at the forum stated their disagreement for pouring millions of tax-payer dollars into an education system that is not producing effective results.

According to Senator Alexander (R-TN), government should be creating opportunities, not trying to solve problems. His proposals consisted of a Lincoln approach of "empowering" students and teachers, not controlling them, where competition was the key among states and a federal tax system that encouraged parents to teach was also an element. He insisted that parents be given more choices and control when it comes to choosing education for their child, while giving incentives to teachers who perform well. He closed by encouraging Republicans to create proposals and plans that would encourage opportunities for both the child and parent, while keeping the government from becoming controlling.

Representative Mike Castle (R-DE) took a similar approach while maintaining that we must work within the confines of the system that already exists. While he believed it was difficult to make "wholesale" changes, eliminating national standards and assessments would be a favorable change. Rep. Castle acknowledged that the one thing that is missing in our present education system is parental involvement. He believes that parents should be encouraged and given incentives to choose the best education for their child.

Senator Jim Demint (R-SC), sponsor of the A-Plus Act which allows freedom and flexibility from regulations on federal funds given to the states for education incentives, expressed the need for politicians to stop politicizing the education system, and to recognize what works. He discussed the D.C. Scholarship program and the evidence that proved its successful results, and condemned the government from threatening the existence of the program based on purely political reasons. He stated that if the government were to take away half of public education spending, the private sector would step in, and rightly so. He also expressed concern that initiatives should be based on parental involvement and incentives.

Not all attending the forum were satisfied with the Republican's comments. According to Mike Petrilli, of the TBF Institute, the forum closed on a [rather stagnant note](#). While the guests spoke of what needs to happen, no real solutions or new ideas were presented to get things started.

To watch a video recording of the forum: [Video of Republicans and Education Forum](#)

Calling all Videographers!

Attention Pro-Life Students! You are invited to participate in a film contest where winners will be selected from two different age categories for a \$1,000 scholarship! The Susan B. Anthony List, an advocate for the pro-life movement, is looking for ways to get students involved in the important issue of Life. The contest was inspired by Lia Mills, a twelve-year-old girl, who wrote a speech about abortion for a contest at her local school and won. Lia has posted the speech on YouTube and has become a national inspiration for the pro-life cause. Now SBA is giving all students an opportunity to do the same! They are looking for students to create a 2-5 minute video on this issue of life. The video does not have to be a speech, so be creative! This is a great opportunity for children across the nation to creatively speak out on a moral issue and participate in a movement that seeks to restore and protect the sanctity of life.

For Information about the Contest and to watch Lia's speech: [SBA Contest Information and Rules](#); [Lia's Speech](#)

In Case You Missed It:

[Federalized Pre-K: Could do more Harm than Good](#)

[Boosts in Anti-Abortion Efforts](#)

[FRC Video of First 100 Days](#)

[To Notre Dame: "I cannot accept"](#)

