

# Hate Crimes Bill Opponents Protest for Right to Preach on Biblical Sin

By

Michelle Vu

Christian Post Reporter

Thu, Jul. 12 2007 01:53 PM ET

WASHINGTON – Christian pro-family groups from across the nation rallied at the Capitol Wednesday to protest against the hate crimes bill currently being reviewed by the Senate, which opponents argue will endanger the rights of Christians to preach about the sin of homosexuality.



*The Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson, founder and president of BOND, is joined (from left) by former U.S. Navy Chaplain Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt and Dr. Johnny M. Hunter, national director of LEARN and other opponents of the Senate hate crimes bill S. 1105 at a rally held across from the Capitol on Wednesday, July 11, 2007 in Washington, D.C.*



“This hate crime legislation is hatred and intolerance aimed at ministers and good Christian folks who dare to call sin ‘sin,’” said Dr. Johnny M. Hunter, national director of LEARN (Life Education and Resource Network).

“Pastors not only have a right, but they have an obligation to state emphatically, that according to Scripture, a man or a woman should not perform a sex act with a person of the same sex,” he said, as a long yellow banner facing the Capitol read “Homosexuality is a Sin” flapped in the wind beside him.

Hunter noted that the “moral code” on sin does not only apply to some but to all so it is not discriminatory.

“If a lesbian kills another lesbian, would she be charged with a hate crime? If a man kills the man he calls his partner, would he be charged with a hate crime?” questioned Hunter. “If not, then that law would be discriminatory because it would only apply to heterosexuals.”

Christian and pro-family groups have been protesting the hate crimes bill for months, arguing that the federal bill is not only redundant of state and local laws, but it also threatens the free speech of those who speak on the biblical view of homosexuality.

The Senate bill, S. 1105, would expand the federal hate crimes categories to include sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and disability, adding them to racial, ethnic, and religious categories already protected under the law.

In May, the U.S. House of Representative voted to pass its version of the bill, H.R. 1592, which would expand the hate crimes categories and make it easier for the federal government to get involved in hate crime investigations.

Supporters of the hate crimes bill argue that the legislation will help protect vulnerable groups from hate-motivated violence.

“This bill helps law enforcement protect vulnerable groups from hate-motivated violence, a goal that appeals to the moral foundations of all faith traditions,” said the Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy, president of The Interfaith Alliance, in a statement.

The Interfaith Alliance is a member of the coalition of over 30 religious organizations which released an open letter on Wednesday in support of the Senate passing the hate crimes bill. The letter was signed by 1,385 clergies representing over 75 different faith traditions.

Yet adamant opponents of the bill point out that a pastor who preaches against homosexuality can be accused of inciting violence if one of his congregants commits an act considered a hate crime under the legislation.

“Under the guise of protecting the immoral, unnatural, ungodly lifestyle of homosexuals, our government is being forced to censor the freedom of speech and freedom of religion of Bible-believing Christians,” said the Rev. Rusty Lee Thomas, director of Elijah Ministries.

“We have come to Washington, D.C., to appeal to our government to back off...return to your jurisdiction, get out of our churches, quit policing our thoughts and stop trying to sear our consciences by framing mischief into law,” Thomas vented.

Others who spoke at the rally included the Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson, founder and president of BOND (Brotherhood Organization of a New Destiny), and former U.S. Navy chaplain Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt, who was dismissed earlier this year for praying in Jesus name after a long legal battle.

“We are calling upon the United States Congress to rescind [the bill] and asking President Bush to veto this hate crimes speech law because it will directly come after our pastors,” said Klingenschmitt.

The White House in May had already said the president plans to veto the hate crimes bill if it makes it to his desk, explaining that other criminal laws already address the crimes featured in the bills.