

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 1, 2009

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Chairman
United States House Armed Services Committee
United States House of Representatives

Dear Chairman Skelton:

As you know, the Senate passed an amendment offered by Senator Leahy to the FY 2010 National Defense Authorization Act to modify federal criminal law based on the motivations for certain crimes. We know that this amendment cannot be included in the conference report without both Senator Levin's and your agreement. We are grateful you are in the position you are in and we respectfully request that you not agree to allow this non-germane amendment to be included as part of the conference report.

Cloture was invoked on the Leahy amendment by a vote of 63-28, which attached S. 909 to the underlying FY 2010 National Defense Authorization bill. Hate crimes laws allow the same violent action to be punished more harshly because of the words or thoughts motivating the attack. To be certain, we believe it is important that we work as a nation to continue to reduce violent crime of all kinds. We should provide our police and prosecutors the tools they need to vigorously and fairly prosecute crime. So-called hate crimes legislation, however, is not the most appropriate tool for this effort and instead sets a dangerous precedent for codifying thought and feeling in law. Furthermore, all victims of violence should have equal worth in the eyes of the law, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or status.

The Leahy amendment is also out of place in the annual defense policy bill. Previous attempts to include similar non-germane language in a defense authorization bill, the purpose of which is to provide the tools and resources for our men and women serving in the armed services, have appropriately failed. Unlike legislation reported from many other committees, the defense policy bill has traditionally enjoyed broad bipartisan support. We implore you to ensure that this bill maintains that support by opposing the inclusion of the Leahy amendment in any form.

We are hopeful to support a defense policy bill that simply provides necessary support for our brave servicemen and women. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Hill FL-01
Mark Blumenthal OH-3

Bill Shuster PA-9

Ron Duncan CA-52

John Boehner FL-16

John Klein MN-2

Bob Byrd WV

Mike Coffman CO-6

K. Michael Conaway TX-11

Mac Thornberry TX-13

Bob Wittman VA-01

Mary Fallin OK-5
Walter B. Jones

W. Gooden MO-2

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Joe Wilson SC-02

Charles W. Stenholm WA-05
