



March 26, 2010

CALL TO ACTION:

Oppose Oklahoma Senate's attempt to opt-out of federal hate crimes law

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) was dismayed to learn of attempts by Oklahoma law-makers to curtail the rights and remedies afforded to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people under the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Law of 2009.

Local legislators who introduced Oklahoma Senate Bill 1965 incorrectly assert that the federal legislation impinges on Oklahomans' rights to free speech. Led by Senator Steve Russell, elected officials claim that the federal law threatened members of religious communities' right to speak out against LGBTQ people.

This action is a gross distortion of states' rights and a misrepresentation of the federal hate crimes law, which already protects free speech. SB 1965 is a thinly-veiled attempt to curtail local law enforcement's duty to appropriately respond to and investigate hate crimes and to extend leniency to perpetrators of anti-LGBTQ hate violence.

NCAVP members work daily to prevent and respond to anti-LGBTQ violence and protect every person's right to safety and freedom from fear of violence. NCAVP knows that the remedies of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Law are needed more now than ever, particularly in states such as Oklahoma that not only deny equal protection to LGBTQ people but also are willing to flout federal law to do so.

Oklahomans, including congregations such as the United Church of Christ, have written letters to oppose OK SB 1965. NCAVP joins local faith-based organizations and community groups such as [PFLAG Oklahoma](#), [Cimarron Alliance Foundation](#), and [Oklahomans for Equality](#) in their opposition to the bill. NCAVP encourages those who support *all* people's rights to safety and freedom from violence to make their views known by emailing Oklahoma state legislators at <http://www.lsb.state.ok.us>.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) addresses the pervasive problem of violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) and HIV-affected communities. NCAVP is a coalition of programs that document and advocate for victims and survivors of anti-LGBTQ and anti-HIV/AIDS violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct and other forms of victimization. Further, NCAVP supports existing anti-violence organizations and emerging local programs in their efforts to document and prevent such violence. NCAVP is a program of the New York City Anti-Violence Project.