

and pose a significant threat to the full participation of all Americans in our democratic society. In the wake of the November Presidential election, the Southern Poverty Law Center has detailed hundreds of hate crime incidents, vandalism and threats, including the election-night assault of Alie Kamara on Staten Island by two teenagers who shouted racial epithets and "Obama!" as they beat him. Moreover, statistics have shown hate crimes against Latinos and Asian Americans rising steadily over the past four years as the immigration has grown more intense. In the last eight months, there have been three brutal hate-related murders of Latinos in New York and Pennsylvania. While intolerance may be in retreat, its presence is still felt in many minority communities.

The FBI has the best national data on reported hate crime, though the program is voluntary. Since 1991, the FBI has documented over 118,000 hate crimes. For the year 2007, the most current data available, the FBI compiled reports from law enforcement agencies across the country identifying 7,624 bias-motivated criminal incidents that were directed against an individual because of their personal characteristics. Law enforcement agencies identified 9,535 victims arising from 9,006 separate criminal offenses. As in the past, racially motivated bias accounted for approximately half (50.8 %) of all incidents. Religious bias accounted for 1,400 incidents (18.4 %) and sexual orientation bias accounted for 1,265 incidents—(16.6 %), followed by ethnicity/national origin bias with 1,007 incidents—(13.2%). While these numbers are disturbing, it is important to note that, for a variety of reasons, hate crimes are seriously under-reported.

Despite the deep impact of hate violence on communities, current law limits federal jurisdiction over hate crimes to incidents directed against individuals on the basis of race, religion, color or national origin—but only when the victim is targeted because he/she is engaged in a federally protected activity, such as voting. Further, the statutes do not permit federal involvement in a range of cases where crimes are motivated by bias against the victim's perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. The federal government must have authority to be involved in investigating and prosecuting these crimes when state authorities cannot or will not do so.

This legislation, which is identical to the version approved in the 110th Congress, will strengthen existing federal law in the same way that the Church Arson Prevention Act of 1996 helped federal prosecutors combat church arson: by addressing the unduly rigid jurisdictional requirements under federal law. The bill only applies to bias-motivated violent crimes and does not impinge public speech or writing in any way. In fact, the measure includes an explicit First Amendment free speech protection for the accused modeled on the existing Washington state hate crimes statute. This bill will only apply to criminal conduct that is already being prosecuted.

State and local authorities currently prosecute the overwhelming majority of hate crimes and will continue to do so under this legislation. The federal government will continue to defer to state and local authorities in the vast majority of cases; the Attorney General or other high ranking Justice Department official must approve any prosecutions under-

taken pursuant to this law, ensuring federal restraint. However, in appropriate circumstances, the federal government will be able to provide support for local prosecutions—an intergovernmental grant program created by this legislation will make Justice Department technical, forensic or prosecutorial assistance available. The legislation also authorizes the Attorney General to make grants to state and local law enforcement agencies that have incurred extraordinary expenses associated with the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

Hate crime statistics do not speak for themselves. Behind each of the statistics is an individual or community targeted for violence for no other reason than race, religion, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability. Law enforcement authorities and civic leaders have learned that a failure to address the problem of bias crime can cause a seemingly isolated incident to fester into widespread tension that can damage the social fabric of the wider community. The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 is a constructive and measured response to a problem that continues to plague our nation. These are crimes that shock and shame our national conscience. They should be subject to comprehensive federal law enforcement assistance and prosecution.

CONGRATULATING DR. VIC
MORGAN

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate my friend, Dr. Vic Morgan, as he formally retires after 18 years of serving as President of Sul Ross State University.

Throughout his tenure as President, Dr. Morgan has demonstrated strong leadership and a commitment to providing a valuable academic experience for the students of Sul Ross State University. Having begun his career at SRSU as an Associate Professor of Mathematics, Dr. Morgan is the first faculty member to be promoted from within the University to its highest position.

In addition to having fulfilled his responsibilities as President, Dr. Morgan remained extremely active in professional organizations in mathematics, student affairs, and educational administration. He has exemplified community service through his selfless work with the Church of Christ, the Lions Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and numerous youth related activities and organizations.

After a decorated career at Sul Ross State University, Dr. Vic Morgan will retire having left a lasting impact on so many students and teachers whose lives he's touched. As a former educator myself, I am especially thankful for his steadfast commitment to students and educators in Texas' 23rd Congressional District. I wish to extend my sincerest wishes to Dr. Vic Morgan and his family for a healthy and much deserved retirement.

HONORING THE DOGWOOD TRAIL
MAIDS FOR PARTICIPATING IN
THE NATIONAL CHERRY BLOSSOM
FESTIVAL

HON. JO BONNER

OF ALABAMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. BONNER. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Dogwood Trail Maids for being selected to participate in this year's National Cherry Blossom Festival.

Held annually, the Cherry Blossom festival commemorates the 1912 gift of 3,000 cherry trees from the mayor of Tokyo to the city of Washington and honors the lasting friendship between the United States and Japan.

Today, more than a million people travel to Washington each year to see the blossoming cherry trees and attend events that signal the beginning of spring in our Nation's capital.

For 49 years, the Dogwood Trail Pageant and Scholarship Program—comprised of six high school girls from Baldwin County—complete nearly 200 hours of community service and make more than 50 appearances, including festivals, charity runs and ceremonies. The trail maids were even invited to both of Governor Bob Riley's Inaugural parades.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Dogwood Trail Maids for their participation in the 2009 National Cherry Blossom Festival. I know Baldwin County and indeed, the State of Alabama are so proud for these young ladies to travel to Washington and participate in the organization's first Cherry Blossom parade.

HONORING GARY CHASEY FOR
"CITIZEN OF THE YEAR" AWARD

HON. JEB HENSARLING

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, April 2, 2009

Mr. HENSARLING. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the exceptional service and leadership of Mr. Gary Chasey of Athens, Texas. Mr. Chasey has served his community for years in many capacities and was recently recognized as the "Citizen of the Year" by the Athens Chamber of Commerce.

Gary, along with his wife, Sharon, volunteers with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). Through this very special and important capacity, Gary has changed the lives of dozens of children in his community. As a CASA volunteer, he looks after the interest of children who are in the court system. He has spent countless hours advocating and watching over abused and neglected children.

For several years, Gary has served as President and Vice-President for Labor of Love of Henderson County. Labor of Love is an organization that repairs homes for those in the community who cannot afford to make repairs or complete maintenance tasks. As a leader in Labor of Love, Gary has helped increase completed projects by over 90%. His financial expertise, leadership and tireless work ethic have undoubtedly benefited countless citizens.

In addition, Gary is a member of the First Presbyterian Church and is active with the