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ACTION ALERT-ACT BY SEPTEMBER 11

Protect Homeless Americans from Hate-Motivated Violence

ACTION REQUESTED: The National Coalition for the Homeless urges homeless people, advocates, service providers, and other concerned Americans to contact their Representative and ask him/her to cosponsor the *Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act*, which will add homeless people to the federal hate crimes statistics statute.

National, state, and local organizations are also invited to sign a letter endorsing the legislation by emailing the NCH Policy Advocate Charles Bontrager at cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org.

ISSUE STATUS:

Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) and Robert Wexler (D-FL) have prepared the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act and are preparing to introduce it the last week of July. Representatives Johnson and Wexler have invited their colleagues in the House of Representatives to join the bill as co-sponsors. (The bill does not yet have a bill number as it has not been dropped yet.)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Call your Representative to encourage them to cosponsor the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act.
- Inform the receptionist that you would like to speak with the Representative's Judiciary Legislative Assistant to make a request about hate crimes legislation.
- The receptionist will transfer you to that person or his/her voicemail box. Whether you are speaking live or leaving a message, you are invited to use this text as a call script:

"Hello. My name is ____ and I live in [your hometown and state]. I am calling to urge the Representative to take action to include homeless people in federal hate crimes statistics statutes. Specifically, I urge the Representative to express support for the inclusion of homeless status as a covered group under the federal hate crimes statistics statute by cosponsoring the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act being introduced by Representatives Eddie Bernice Johnson and Robert Wexler.

The Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act is important legislation to monitor hate crimes against homeless people. Unfortunately, current legislation does not monitor crimes against people experiencing homelessness, a population group of victims that is also experiencing a pattern of intentional bias-based selection.

**** If you are aware of a recent attack against a homeless person in your home state, please share this information with your Representative.*

I look forward to learning the Representative's decision on this request. I may be reached at XXX. Thank you."

- Follow the phone call with a fax letter to the Representative. A sample letter is provided.

- Also, please add your national, state, or local organization to a sign-on letter to Representatives Johnson and Wexler expressing your organization's support for the legislation. To view the sign on letter, please visit www.nationalhomeless.org/advocacy/HCAHSA_SignOnLetter-0709.pdf .
  To join the sign-on letter, please send you organization name and contact information to cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org.

BACKGROUND:

"Hate crimes" are criminal offenses committed against a person, property, or society which are motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a certain class of people. In many cases, perpetrators of hate crimes do not know their victims personally and they do not seek material gain or vengeance; their actions are intended only to intimidate or dehumanize. The damage done by hate crimes cannot be measured solely in terms of physical injury or dollars and cents; hate crimes leave a special emotional and psychological mark on victims and their communities, leaving them feeling isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law.

Since 1999, the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty have documented over 700 unprovoked violent attacks against homeless individuals, with over 200 of those attacks resulting in death. These attacks ranged from beating a victim with a golf club to dousing a sleeping man with gasoline and setting him on fire. Victims included men and women, veterans, children as young as four, youth, and elders. Though these statistics are troubling, they do not represent the full extent of the problem, as countless acts of violence against the homeless go unnoticed or unreported.

ACTION RESOURCES:

- To read the latest report on hate crimes against homeless people, visit: http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/hatecrimes/index.html
- To read an NCH Public Policy Recommendation on Homeless Hate Crimes Legislation, visit: http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/2009Policy/HateCrimes.pdf

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Charles Bontrager, NCH Policy Advocate, cbontrager@nationalhomeless.org or 202.462.4822.