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National Coalition for the Homeless Newsletter

NCH NEWS

May 14, 2010

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Part of our Past, NOT our Future

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TODAY**

Two More States Say Attacks Against the Homeless are Hate Crimes

by Donna Leuchten, Bill Emerson Congressional Hunger Fellow

Under federal U.S. law, biased-related violence against homeless individuals is not considered a hate crime. However, for over ten years NCH has collected incidents where homeless persons have become targets solely based on their housing status. Most recently, a case in [Cincinnati, OH](#) hit the national news when four young men, including three currently enlisted in the military, went into a homeless encampment and severely beat Jack Johnson. The attackers referred to Johnson as a bum and told him to get a job as they beat him with a bat and a pipe. In response to such violence, states have chosen to step up and protect the homeless of their state. Most recently, Florida and California, two states with high rates of known homeless hate crimes, have taken legislative measures.

In Florida, "homeless status" [has been added](#) to state hate crime legislation. Florida House Bill [11- Crimes Against Homeless Persons](#), filed by Representatives Porth and Rogers was passed by both the Florida House of Representatives and Senate in late April and was signed into law by Governor Crist on May 11, 2010. Starting October 1, 2010, biased related offenses targeting homeless persons in Florida will be reclassified as hate crimes and perpetrators will receive stricter penalties.

In addition to Florida's Legislature, California is also taking steps to protect homeless people in their state. California Assembly [Bill 2706](#), introduced by Assembly Member Bonnie Lowenthal, was passed by the Assembly on May 6, 2010 with a 48-24 vote. If passed by the Senate and signed into law, California will grant enhanced civil right protections for homeless persons through civil litigation. Specifically, it would allow a homeless individual to sue for higher damages if they were victims of intimidation or violence and their attack was determined to be motivated by hate.

Similar legislation is also expected to be introduced in Ohio soon.

Policy Updates

NHTF Campaign Will Send Letter to Congress Urging Immediate Funding

The National Housing Trust Fund Campaign will send its letter to every Member of Congress next week calling for the immediate funding of the National Housing Trust Fund. The letter has been signed by organizations in each of the 435 Congressional districts, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

More than 2,200 national, state, and local organizations have signed the letter. The NHTF Campaign will continue to collect organizational sign-ons, which will be posted on the NHTF website. Sign on at: www.nlhfc.org/sign.

Briefing Launches New Congressional Caucus on Homelessness

Representative Alcee Hastings (D-FL), in conjunction with Representatives Judy Biggert (R-IL), Eddie Bernice Johnston (D-TX), and Geoff Davis (R-KY), launched a new Congressional Caucus on Homelessness. The Caucus will work to educate Members of Congress and their staff on issues affecting people experiencing homelessness.

The Caucus kicked off their work with a congressional briefing on homelessness on May 4th. Caucus leaders promised to work with advocates on issues affecting people experiencing homelessness. Briefing panelists included Barbara Poppe of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, advocates and a permanent supportive housing resident.

HELP Committee to Include Homeless Children in ESEA Reauthorization

On April 29th the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee held a hearing on Meeting the Needs of Special Populations in the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Denise Ross the Supervisor of the Homeless Education Office of Prince George's County Public Schools, MD, testified about the unique needs of homeless children and the challenges and needs of school administrators trying to meet those needs.

Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act Work Continues

Interest continues in homeless hate crimes legislation at the federal level following the lead of states such as

Maryland and Maine and movement at the State continues in states such as Florida and California.

At the federal level the National Coalition for the Homeless is building momentum by working to secure additional co-sponsors for both the Senate and House bills (S. 1765, H.R. 3419). NCH requests that all advocates call their Senators and Representatives and request that they co-sponsor the Hate Crimes Against the Homeless Statistics Act (S. 1765, H.R. 3419).

Senators and Representatives on the Senate and House Judiciary Committees are particularly important and so NCH requests a special effort from advocates in the following states: AL, AZ, CA, CO, DE, FL, GA, IA, IL, MA, MD, MI, MN, MS, NC, NY, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, TN, TX, UT, VA, VT, WI.
For more information please see our Action Alert [here](#).

Local Advocate Drops off Birthday Donations

What do you want for your birthday? Elsa (pictured with NCH Executive Director Neil Donovan and Development Director Megan Hustings) asked for something not many would think of, all she wanted were donations to help end homelessness.



In her travels around the Washington, DC area, Elsa has seen many people forced to live and sleep on the streets, even befriending people she and her family passed often. It never seemed right to her that some people do not have homes, so for her 7th birthday this year, she asked all of her friends to bring donations instead of gifts.

Elsa raised an incredible \$130 in contributions for the National Coalition for the Homeless to help in our programs that work to get people back into housing. We are very grateful for Elsa's work to raise awareness about homelessness! She is working to Bring America Home!

NCH News

Miss Florida to Visit NCH Offices

Since winning the Miss Florida title in July 2009, Rachel Todd has been visiting homeless programs in Florida, meeting with the recipients of services, and lobbying members of the Florida State and Federal legislatures.



Todd, a 23-year-old University of Central Florida graduate, has made "Changing the Face of Homelessness" her pageant platform after growing up helping the homeless members of her community growing up. Todd's mother, Krissy Todd, heads up the Hope Foundation in Oviedo which works to end homelessness. Staffed by a NCH AmeriCorps*VISTA Volunteer, the Hope Foundation hosts NCH's Faces of Homelessness Speakers' Bureau project in Seminole County.

Shortly after winning the Miss Florida title in July, Todd traveled to Washington, DC to attend a homelessness conference and to lobby U.S. House Members on the homeless hate crimes legislation (H.R. 3419). As Miss Florida nears the end of her reign, she is returning to Washington, DC the week of May 16 to continue her lobbying on H.R. 3419, along with its companion bill (S. 1765) in the U.S. Senate. With Florida enacting homeless hate crimes legislation on May 11, she hopes to convince the Florida's Congressional Delegation to support this important piece of legislation.

While in Washington, DC, Todd will also be visiting the NCH offices to volunteer and to take part in NCH's Faces of Homelessness presentations to youth groups.

NCH Social Networking

For the last month, NCH staff has been connecting with NCH membership in new ways through the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. Every day, staff members are posting news stories, blog posts and other information that is of interest to our membership. Through this increased outreach, NCH now averages 10 interactions a day with members on Facebook, and an average of 10 ReTweets each week! We now have over 2,000 fans on Facebook and 1,000 followers on Twitter!

A big thanks to all those who are following NCH updates through these social networking sites!! We are enjoying hearing from you and are learning a lot about how are programs and work affects your everyday life.

If you aren't receiving our updates, "Like" NCH today on [Facebook](#), and follow us on [Twitter](#). We'll see you online!

NCH Board Elects New Directors and Board Officers

The National Coalition for the Homeless' Nomination Committee presented its slate of nominees to NCH's full board at its spring meeting held in Washington, DC. The Board of Directors elected six new directors, each to hold office for a term of three years with no limit on the number of terms a director may serve.

The newly elected directors are:
Chandra L. Crawford, PhD., Director, Unity of Greater New Orleans

Joseph G. Finn, Esq., President, Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance
Tina Hayward, Chair, Partnership to End Homelessness, Vicksburg, MS
Stephen Thomas, Advocate & Speaker, National Coalition for the Homelessness
Yvonne M. Vissing, PhD., Professor of Sociology, Salem State College
Donald H. Whitehead Jr., Saint Vincent de Paul of Baltimore, Asst. Director

The newly elected board officers are:

President: John Parvensky, Esq., President, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Vice President: Brian Davis, Director, Executive Director, Northeast Ohio Coalition
Treasurer: Sue Watlov-Phillips, President Elim Transitional Housing, Minn. MN
Secretary: Sherri Downing, Coordinator, Montana Council on Homelessness

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