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September 4, 2007

Honorable Harry Reid
528 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell
361-A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Reid and Senator McConnell:

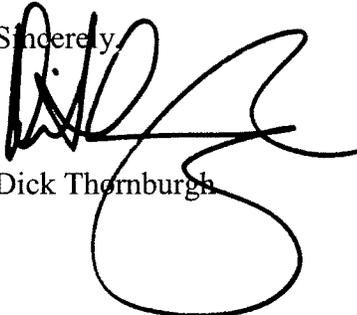
I write today in support of the S. 1105, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007.

As Attorney General of the United States from 1988 to 1991, I strongly supported the enactment of the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990, which required the Justice Department to acquire data on crimes which "manifest prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity" from law enforcement agencies across the country and to publish an annual summary of the findings. For seventeen years, the FBI has provided an annual measure of this national problem. More information about the nature and magnitude of the problem has prompted a number of states to adopt strengthened hate crime laws. Now is the time for the federal government to update and modernize its hate crime laws as well.

The pending legislation – which as you know has already passed the House – would strengthen existing hate crime protections by providing new tools for law enforcement and by authorizing the Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute certain bias-motivated crimes based on the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability. Current federal law does not provide sufficient authority for involvement in these cases. I am particularly concerned with reports that bias-motivated crimes against those with disabilities have too often gone unreported and unprosecuted because of unique problems associated with investigating and prosecuting those crimes. Additional federal resources can help ensure that justice prevails.

Effective response to hate violence is not a partisan issue – it is an American issue which goes to the very core of our nation's beliefs in equality and fair treatment for all. I urge you to enact the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act in this session of Congress.

Sincerely,



Dick Thornburgh