



ADVOCACY ALERT

HATE CRIMES BILL HB 426

ALERT

Georgia is one of only five states without a hate crimes law. The events of recent weeks highlight the danger of allowing violence motivated by hate to go unpunished. Presbyterians for a Better Georgia encourages you to support passage of the Hate Crimes legislation this session by contacting state leadership and your State Senator. Every call from a constituent makes a difference—they work for you! You may use the following guideline in advocating for this bill.

Background

[HB 426](#) was introduced by former prosecutor and Republican legislator from Dacula, Rep. Chuck Efstrotation. It passed the Georgia House in 2019 with a bipartisan vote. However, there has been no action in the State Senate Judiciary Committee in 2020. As we anticipate the legislature to resume its suspended session on June 11, we need your voice to reach out now to urge that the Senate Judiciary Committee hear and pass this bill and that the Senate take action to ensure passage of this important bill this year.

ACTION

Please call or email today to these legislators and state leaders:

Governor Brian Kemp (404) 656-1776 or <https://gov.georgia.gov/contact-us/constituent-services>

Lt. Gov Geoff Duncan (404) 656-5030 or <https://ltgov.georgia.gov/constituent-services>

Judiciary Chair Sen. Jesse Stone (404) 463-1314 or jesse.stone@senate.ga.gov

Your State Senator: Find your State Senator here and how to contact them: www.openstates.org

2 Points:

Become familiar with the following language:

1. Presbyterians believe in the inherent dignity and worth of all people, without prejudice. **HB 426** provides for an increased punishment for commission of hate crimes. A hate crime exists when a court finds that a crime was committed and that the “defendant intentionally selected any victim ... because of their ... race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, mental disability, or physical disability.” Hate crimes merit enhanced punishments because the harm was visited, not only upon a particular individual but as a means to diminish and intimidate a group of people sharing those particular characteristics.

Studies show that victims of crimes of prejudice and hate report the crimes at a lower rate out of fear. The prejudice which underlies the crime denies the human right to live free of discrimination. It is offensive to people of faith as such crimes specifically deny the shared image of God all humanity bears.

By enacting hate crimes legislation, the state acknowledges the reality of targeted violence, more strongly affirms the inherent dignity of all people, and thus supports the reporting of crimes against those whom the crime intends to silence. Hate crimes legislation assures victims



that their equal rights as human beings are recognized by the state.

(See the [SPLC website](#) for discussion of decreased reporting. The quoted portions are from the bill itself.)

B. Presbyterians believe the law should both punish criminal behavior with a just sentence that fits the crime; and also, deter criminal action. When a crime victim is targeted because of bigotry it terrorizes the victim's whole community and frays the fabric of our society. Hate crimes legislation acknowledges the increased level of malice incurred in discriminatory violence with an appropriate increase in sentencing guidelines. Therefore, hate crimes laws are a just use of the law and an appropriate guideline granting justice and mercy to the victims, to those sharing characteristics with them, and assuring all Georgians of a just society.

For these reasons we support **HB 426, the Hate Crimes Bill**, and ask that you **vote yes without amendment.**

[The AJC reported this from House Speaker David Ralston](#): "Ralston said he would "challenge and implore" Senate lawmakers to pass the hate crimes bill already adopted by his chamber, [House Bill 426](#), "with no delay and no amendments" when the session resumes in June. "The time for being silent ended last week," Ralston said. "It's time to do what's right. It's going to take some leadership and some courage, but I think it's time to act."

2 Minutes: Script:

I am a voting constituent of _____.

Thank you for your service to Georgia and (your city/town/county). I am calling in support of HB 426, the Hate Crimes Bill, for these reasons:

I am a Presbyterian and I believe (use the points above in your own words, or other reasons you support the bill).

Please **VOTE YES on HB 426, *with no amendments***, to show that Georgia will not tolerate hate-based crime because we are a STATE too busy to hate.

If you would like to speak with me, I am available.....

2 People

Call your State Senator and all or any of the other key leaders listed above.

After you have completed your call, call or email a friend and ask them to do the same.

Join

Please click [here](#) to leave a comment about your call and experience.

Presbyterians for a Better Georgia is grateful for your efforts to make Georgia better. If you would like more information about the issues, you can check our website www.p4bg.org, follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or [Instagram](#).

Together, Presbyterians are making Georgia better!