

# NHMC Applauds Passage of Hate Crime Legislation

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Washington, D.C - Today the Senate passed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. The legislation expands the definition of hate crimes and eases the path to hate crime prosecution. President Obama is expected to sign the bill into law very soon.

"We applaud Congress for passing this very important piece of legislation. This is a great first step towards combating a grave problem," stated Alex Nogales, NHMC President and CEO. "FBI statistics document that hate crimes against Latinos have spiked 40% in just the past few years and this legislation will be key in protecting the Latino community from hate-motivated bias."

NHMC grew more concerned with the incidence of hate crimes against members of the Latino community in 2006 while the immigration debate was taking place in Congress. "We noticed that as the rhetoric on mainstream media became more hateful in nature, that anti-Latino hate crimes rose in frequency and intensity," said Inez Gonzalez, NHMC's Executive Vice President. The problem has not subsided since then. In the latter portion of 2008, four Latinos were brutally beaten to death because of the color of their skin, and countless others were assaulted and harassed.

NHMC has been demanding government intervention on hate speech in media. In January of 2009 it filed a petition for inquiry at the Federal Communications Commission, asking the agency to examine the extent and effects of hate speech in media, and seek ways to countervail its negative impacts. At the same time, it sent a letter to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, insisting that it update a 1993 report, *The Role of Telecommunications in Hate Crimes*.

NHMC is a non-profit media advocacy organization that has a three-pronged mission: to improve the image of American Latinos as portrayed by the media; to increase Latino employment in all facets of the media industry; and to advocate for media and telecommunications policies that benefit the Latino community.

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**NHMC National Office** | 55 S Grand Avenue, Pasadena CA, 91105  
Tel: (626) 792-NHMC (6462) | Fax: (626) 792-6051 | [info@nhmc.org](mailto:info@nhmc.org)