



# JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE / JACL

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## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## JACL VICTORY ON HATE CRIMES BILL

Washington, D.C. - Late this afternoon, the Senate approved the FY 2010 Department of Defense Authorization Conference Report, which contains the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, by a vote of 68-28. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) has vigorously fought for this victory for over ten years and commends the leadership of both chambers of Congress on this momentous triumph.

This provision expands the coverage of existing hate crime laws to include crimes not only based on race, color, religion, and national origin, but also bias-motivated crimes based on the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability. For the first time, the hate crimes provision will protect individuals of bias-motivated crimes based on gender identity. The hate crimes provision will also provide the federal government with jurisdiction to prosecute hate crimes in states where current law or local law enforcement action are inadequate. This increased protection will help ethnic and racial groups that continue to be subjected to bias-motivated violence and intimidation.

Passage of the Hate Crimes provisions will ensure that all people have the right to be safe and free from physical harm and intimidation. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act sends a clear message that Americans do not have to live in fear. For over a decade, the JACL has laboriously worked to expand hate crimes prevention law and anxiously awaits the President's signature in the following weeks.

### End ###