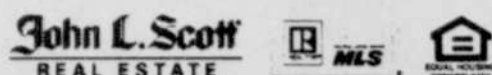


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**NATIONAL news**



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From left, U.S. Rep. Connie Morella, R-Md.; U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass.; 17-year-old Sara Ellzey of Pennsylvania; and U.S. Sens. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., and John Conyers Jr., D-Mich., answer reporters' questions

**NATIONAL**

U.S. Sens. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., reintroduced legislation March 27 to extend existing federal hate crimes laws to include gender, disability and sexual orientation. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, formerly the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, had a record number of original co-sponsors—51 in the Senate and 180 in the House—at the time of the announcement.

In June 2000, the Senate voted 57-42—including 13 Republicans—to pass the act. On Sept. 13, the House voted 232-192—including 41 Republicans—to pass a motion to instruct conferees to keep the hate crimes measure in the Defense Department spending bill. Despite bipartisan support in the House and Senate, the GOP leadership successfully stripped out hate crimes legislation while the bill was in conference.

If passed, the bill would amend the 32-year-old federal hate crimes statute—which covers race, religion, color and national origin—to include real or perceived gender, sexual orientation and disability. It would serve as a tool to help law enforcement by allowing federal assistance, when necessary, in the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

The measure has broad support from notable law enforcement agencies and state and local leaders, including 22 state attorneys general, the Police Foundation, the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Sheriffs' Association. A September 2000 Gallup poll showed 72 percent of U.S. citizens agree that hate crime laws should cover lesbian and gay people.

Finding that "reports of death threats, assaults and verbal gay bashing continue almost unabated," Servicemembers Legal Defense Network released *Conduct Unbecoming*, its seventh annual report on "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue, don't harass."

Citing a total of 871 incidents of anti-gay harassment, it again called on the Pentagon to issue its promised orders to the services to revise regulations and training to curb harassment. The group urged Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to implement the 13-point Anti-Harassment Action Plan published by a working group in July 2000.

The Pentagon adopted the plan's recommendations but has

failed to implement them. The plan included, among other things, increased rank-appropriate training for all military personnel.

The Pentagon developed the plan in the wake of its own inspector general's survey of 75,000 servicemembers, which found that 80 percent of men and women in uniform had heard derogatory, anti-gay remarks during the past year. Of those, 37 percent said they had witnessed or experienced targeted incidents of anti-gay harassment.

"The Pentagon's failure to move aggressively to implement the Anti-Harassment Action Plan is inexcusable," said C. Dixon Osburn, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network executive director. "The Pentagon itself has said anti-gay harassment undermines good order, discipline and morale. By tolerating continued harassment, ridicule and assault of men and women in uniform, the Pentagon is working against what it knows to be in the best interest of our armed forces."

Window Media LLC recently announced its pending acquisition of the *Washington Blade* and the *New York Blade News*, two of the nation's premier lesbian and gay newspapers, making it the world's largest gay newspaper group.

"We are honored and excited to steward these respected institutions," president William Waybourn said. "We hope to build upon their historic community roles while bringing new energy to their operations and expanding their capabilities."

Founded in 1997, Window Media publishes the Atlanta-based *Southern Voice*, the nation's largest

gay and lesbian newspaper with editions covering Georgia, the Mid-South, New Orleans and the Gulf Coast; the *Houston Voice*; *Eclipse*, a night life guide for gay Atlanta, New Orleans and Texas; and *SOVO* magazine, a glossy quarterly publication exploring fashion, entertainment and human-interest topics in gay Atlanta. The company's existing publications reach a combined weekly readership of more than 200,000.

Not everyone is pleased about the merger, though. Window Media has become the target of a cybercampaign spearheaded by Greg Herren, *Lambda Book Report* editor.

He doesn't believe claims that the newly

