



Obama Signs Defense Bill With Hate Crimes Extension

President Barack Obama signed the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act on October 28, simultaneously approving the attached extension of hate crimes legislation to include crimes committed because of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.



The hate crimes provision is known as the Matthew Shepard Act, named for the homosexual Wyoming college student murdered over 10 years ago. Democrats had attached this act and the Military Commissions Act to the defense bill over the protest of Republicans who saw the attachment ploy as an unfair way to avoid dealing with the acts separately.

The Military Commissions Act alters the military tribunal system used by the Bush administration. The act disallows the use of any testimony obtained from a prisoner through coercion or torture and prohibits Guantanamo detainees from being released in the United States. It does allow prisoners to be brought here for trial if Congress is given notice 45 days in advance.

In total, the defense bill carries a \$680 billion price tag. It authorizes \$550 billion for the budgets of the Defense and Energy departments, including a 3.4 percent increase in pay for uniformed military personnel. It also devotes \$130 billion to the war effort in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One wonders why a Nobel Peace Prize winner like President Obama wouldn't veto an increase in war funding. Apparently he is at peace with the ongoing war and does not prize the lives of America's sons and daughters enough to bring them home yet.

As for the hate crimes legislation, Obama said it will "help protect our citizens from violence based on what they look like, who they love, how they pray, or who they are." This is also curious. Wouldn't it be better to protect our citizens from all violence equally instead of currying favor from certain segments of the population by offering them a special victim status?

Hate crimes legislation expands the power of the federal government at the expense of states' rights, something that makes all Americans less safe. It does not provide equal justice for all but rather treats some people as being more worthy of protection than others. Star Parker, the founder and president of the [Coalition for Urban Renewal and Education](#), also known as CURE, wrote a [commentary](#) about this that was published in the Dallas Morning News on October 30.

Parker happens to be a black woman who sees the irony in America's first black president supporting this legislation: "A society in which all life is not valued the same, where murder of one citizen is not the same as murder of another citizen, is a horror which black Americans have known too well. So it is a particular irony that this major expansion of the politicization of our law has been signed by our first black president."



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on October 31, 2009

“What could it possibly mean that the penalty for the same act of violence — for murder — may be different depending on what might be deemed to be the motivation?” Parker asks. “Can you imagine a football game where the penalty for roughing the passer is 20 yards rather than 15 if the referee concludes that the violence perpetrated was motivated because the quarterback was homosexual?”

Parker’s insight is keen: “It should be clear that hate-crime legislation has nothing to do with improving our law but rather with creating favored political classes. This should be hateful to everyone who cares about a free society — particularly to those, such as blacks, who have been so victimized by politicization of law.”

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