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The Latino Coalition Strong Urges Congress to Pass H.R. 1592, The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act

Washington, D.C. – The Board of Directors of The Latino Coalition (TLC) today urged congressional leaders to pass H.R. 1592, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (LLEHCPA).

“The tone of the debate over immigration reform has turned so ugly that it has created an environment of hate and intolerance that could quickly evolve into violent activity,” said TLC President Robert Deposada. “The radical rhetoric of extreme groups on both the right and the left could lead to hate groups taking action beyond words. We urge Congressional leaders to quickly pass this legislation that will provide law enforcement with the tools necessary to combat criminal and violent activity. Providing local law enforcement agencies with the resources to prosecute hate crimes will help to protect our community against violent and bias motivated crime.”

Many ask ‘isn't every crime a “hate crime”?’ While every crime involves hate, hate crimes are destructive and divisive. A random act of violence resulting in injury or even death is a tragic event that devastates the lives of the victim and their family, but the intentional selection and beating or murder of an individual *because of who they are* terrorizes an entire community and sometimes the nation. For example, it is easy to recognize the difference between check-kiting and a cross burning; or an arson of an office building versus the intentional torching of a church or synagogue. The church or synagogue burning has a profound impact on the congregation, the faith community, the greater community, and the nation.

The Latino Coalition joins a wide range of national Latino groups in supporting passage of the Hate Crimes legislation, including the National Latino Police Officers Association, Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association, Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association, National Latino Police Officers Association, Hispanic National Law Enforcement Association, Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund, MANA – A National Latina Organization, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, National Council of La Raza, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, National Puerto Rican Coalition, and the Cuban American National Council, among others.

This legislation enjoys wide support, particularly among the law enforcement community. Virtually every major national law enforcement organization in America supports this law including: Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Brotherhood of Police Officers, Major Cities Chiefs Association, National District Attorneys Association, and the National Sheriffs’ Association.

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The hate crimes proposal will provide assistance to state and local law enforcement agencies to combat hate crimes and amend federal law to facilitate the investigation and prosecution of violent, bias-motivated crimes.

In addition, the bill will close a gap in current federal law by authorizing the Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute certain bias-motivated crimes. According to the FBI, law enforcement officials reported 7,163 hate crimes in 2005. State and local authorities investigate and prosecute the overwhelming majority of these hate crime cases — and will continue to do so after the LLEHCPA is enacted. The LLEHCPA, however, would provide a necessary backstop to state and local enforcement by permitting federal authorities to provide assistance in these investigations — and by allowing federal prosecutions when state and local authorities are unable or unwilling to act.

The Latino Coalition is a non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Washington, D.C. TLC was established to address policy issues that directly affect the well-being of Hispanics in the United States. TLC's agenda is to develop and promote policies that will foster economic equivalency and enhance overall business, economic, and social development of Hispanics. For more information please visit our website at www.TheLatinoCoalition.com.

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