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Civil Rights Organizations Applaud the House Passage of Hate Crime Legislation

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by Aria White

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WASHINGTON (NNPA) - The House of Representatives has passed the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crime Prevention Act of 2007 and several civil rights organizations are applauding the long-awaited action.

"We applaud the House's bipartisan passage of this important civil rights law. Today's House vote is a win for you GLBT men and women, including an increasing number of GLBT [gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-gendered] individuals of color, who have lost their lives for merely being who they are," says Wade Henderson, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR) in a statement responding to the May 4 passage.

Henderson also said the violence in hate crimes affect not only individuals, but also the community, which makes this legislation important to the African-American community, long victimized by hate and violence.

The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 will extend federal authority to investigate and prosecute hate violence in crimes based on victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability, according to National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The current hate crime laws only cover race, religion and national origin.

Democrats has struggled to pass the act for several years, but now succeeded because they are the majority.

Rep. John Conyers, Jr., who introduced the legislation, says the Hate Crimes Act is necessary because it will protect the American people from crimes that, "have no place in civilized society."