LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT HATE CRIMES PREVENTION ACT OF 2007

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow this body will take up legislation that is referred to as hate crime legislation. On its face that sounds pretty innocuous, something we should all agree on. We are against hate.

Those of us who believe in the Bible would say that is not something that anyone should engage in. Hate. But the fact is there are laws across America that deal with crimes. What hate crime legislation does is carve out essential exemptions, special punishments for people who commit offenses.

In the past, hate crimes have been limited to felonies that involve serious bodily injury, that kind of thing, in most areas. But here for the first time, we are not going to enhance punishment, we are not going to just only spend money of Federal dollars to help other jurisdictions enforce their hate crime legislation. Now we created a special Federal crime that will allow the full weight of the Federal Government to go after those who, according to the law we will vote on tomorrow, in any circumstance, basically, willfully causes bodily injury to any person.

Now, most hate crime laws refer to serious bodily injury, but not in this legislation. We refer to bodily injury. We have lowered the bar dramatically. There are some jurisdictions that would say bodily injury can be temporary, no matter how temporary. It can be a touching, a pushing.

So, in other words, if someone opposed to your position that, perhaps, was having gender identity issues, like a transvestite, got between you and your office, and there were numbers of them, and you tried to get through to your office, then, as has happened in other places, he may be inclined now to go to the Federal Government, file a criminal complaint for which you could be arrested, and that would be bodily injury sufficient to rise to that level.

Now, some have said, in our committee, that this does not affect any speech, this is only actions. But the trouble is existing Federal law, under 18 U.S. Code 2(a) of the Federal Criminal Code, and I have taken an excerpt from it, says: ''Whoever aids . . . abets, counsels, commands, induces or procures'' a crime's commission is punishable as if they had committed the crime itself.

That's referred to in most jurisdictions as the law of principals. It's not a conspiracy law, it's a law of principals.

Therefore, as I ask about a hypothetical in committee, if a minister were to preach from the Bible or simply read from the Bible, or a rabbi were to read from the Torah or teach from it, or an imam was to read from the Koran, indicating that it is wrong to have sexual relations outside of the marriage of a man and a woman; if someone heard that and went out and committed an offense causing bodily injury, shooting someone, and then when they were questioned, they said, well, my minister, rabbi or imam said this was wrong, and this is what induced me to do this, well, under existing Federal law, when coupled with the law the majority wants to pass tomorrow, that minister could be charged under the law as a principal, as having shot the victim. That would mean that any sermons, any Bible teachings, any Koran or any Torah teachings that were perhaps on file at the home, in the office, on the hard drive, would then be admissible, because that is evidence that this individual taught and preached how wrong this was, which induced the individual to commit the crime.

Now, others say that's ridiculous, and it reminds me a great deal of the debate in this House in 1935, 1936, on Social Security, when some stood here and said, we don't want Social Security numbers because those will one day be utilized as identification numbers. That was roundly guffawed, this is ridiculous. This is simply a number on a Social Security account. It could never be identification. That's ridiculous. Others say, look, we have a provision in here that says first amendment speech.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

U.N. RWANDA GENOCIDE EXHIBIT REVISION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for the remainder of the time until midnight.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, yesterday what was supposed to be an important U.N. exhibit educating the world about the Rwandan genocide was turned into a farce thanks to the actions of the Turkish Government. Three weeks ago, when the Rwanda genocide exhibit was originally set to open, the Turkish Government did what the Turkish Government often does, denied historical facts and objected to the exhibit because it objected to Armenian genocide as an example of genocide.

It was bad enough that this important U.N. exhibit documenting the Rwanda genocide was delayed by 3 weeks because Turkey continued to deny the past, but I was appalled when the exhibit was opened yesterday at the U.N. with one major revision.

Gone was the citing of the systematic killing of 1.5 millions Armenians as genocide. Instead it was referred to as a mass killing in order to appease the Turkish Government. No serious historical dispute exists about the Armenian genocide. Sadly, an intensive and well-financed effort by the Turkish Government has succeeded in preventing the United States, and now the U.N., from any formal recognition of the Armenian genocide.

This is the warped Turkish version of history, and it's simply not acceptable. The Turkish objection to this exhibit is the latest example of their genocide denial. It's absolutely ludicrous that an exhibit dedicated to the education and prevention of genocide would include Armenia as an example, use the definition of the term ''genocide,'' but not use the word ''genocide'' to describe the events.

How, exactly, are you educating the public about genocide when you refuse to call the first genocide of the 20th century by its name? The word ''genocide'' was actually created as a way to describe the barbaric crimes inflicted against the Armenians between 1915 and 1923, but now the word cannot be used in an exhibit at the U.N. This is utterly ridiculous.

Would you ever have an exhibit on Christianity without mentioning the birth of Christ? The same type of absurdity has been used by President Bush during his annual statement commemorating the anniversary of the Armenian genocide. Year after year the Bush administration continues to play word games by not calling evil by its proper name.

If I could just end by saying, I don't think that the U.N. response to genocides should be denigrated to a level acceptable to the Turkish Government. It's about time that the Bush administration started dictating a policy for Americans, not for a foreign government like Turkey. This lack of honesty is simply not acceptable.

Turkey should be condemned for its policy of denying the Armenian genocide. As a global community we must collectively stand for historical truth and properly recognize the worst humanitarian crimes we have seen.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) for the week of April 30 and the week of May 7 on account of maternity leave.

Mr. GRAVES (at the request of Mr. BOEHNER) from 6:30 p.m. today and the balance of the week on account of a death in the family.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. PALLONE) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Ms. WOOLSEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. KAPTUR, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. BERKLEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. WYNN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.