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MATTHEW SHEPARD FOUNDATION APPLAUDS UNITED STATES HOUSE FOR PASSING HATE CRIMES LEGISLATION

ANTI-GAY ORGANIZATIONS FAIL TO PERSUADE CONGRESS WITH MISINFORMATION AND LIES

Casper, WY - The Matthew Shepard Foundation applauds today's passage of inclusive hate crimes legislation by a vote of 237 to 180 in the United States House of Representatives.

This inclusive hate crimes legislation titled the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 (LLEHCPA) and renamed the Matthew Shepard Act in the United States Senate is an appropriate and measured response to the unrelenting and under-addressed problem of hates crimes against individuals based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and disability.

"Although this is the first major step to passing inclusive hate crimes legislation, we have a long way to go to ensure this legislation becomes law. I am personally grateful to the United States House for recognizing the grave reality of hate crimes in America," said Judy Shepard, Executive Director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

Over the last few weeks, this bill has been threatened by misinformation and lies spread by anti-gay organizations trying to block the passage of the bill.

"I am encouraged that the House was able to overcome the lies and misinformation being spread by anti-gay organizations trying to derail this bill. As the parent of a young man killed simply for being gay, I refuse to be silent and let this bill be misconstrued by these organizations," continues Judy Shepard.

Current federal hate crimes law permits the federal prosecution of a hate crime *only* if the hate crime was motivated by bias based on race, color, religion, or national origin and the assailant intends to prevent the victim from exercising a "federally protected right" such as the right to vote or attend school. If this legislation is passed by the Senate and signed by the president, the law would be expanded to protect the GLBT community as well as remove the restrictions on what type of acts can be considered applicable under hate crime law.

Hate crime legislation was first enacted in 1968 when our country saw acts of violent hate focused at the African-American community. When Matthew Shepard was brutally murdered in 1998, the current hate crime legislation did not apply to the crime. Without the federal resources needed, finding justice for this horrific act not only cost the small town of Laramie, Wyoming more than \$150,000 but also forced the local law enforcement to furlough off five of its force.

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The Matthew Shepard Foundation was founded by Dennis and Judy Shepard in memory of their 21-year-old son, Matthew, who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in

Wyoming in October 1998. Created to honor Matthew in a manner that was appropriate to his dreams, beliefs and aspirations, the Foundation seeks to “Replace Hate with Understanding, Compassion & Acceptance” through its varied education, outreach and advocacy programs. For more information, please visit www.MatthewShepard.org