

Crime Bills:

There's news from Washington. Members of Congress are attaching a Hate Crimes Bill to a War Funding Bill and daring the President to veto it. Clever. There's a chance he will and there's a chance he won't. It's a toss up. Apparently the war is as important to the President as hate crimes are to his opponents. It's a stand off. These are interesting times to live in, don't you think?

As of today we have killed thousands of civilians in Iraq. We have been killing innocent people in Iraq for four years now because they were in the way of our program to give them a democracy. They are collateral damage. Too bad they are dead but a mission is a mission. There are thousands who have died who were not carrying an AK 47 or planting IED's or even making angry speeches. A lot of them were children.

Meanwhile at home, there's a political fight about saying that it should be a specific, separate crime to kill people because you hate them. Should it be okay to kill someone because you hate them? Or should it be just like any other killing for money or drugs or love or democracy? It's a challenge, I know. But really, unless you have a problem with gay people, why would you be opposed to hate crimes legislation? Is it because the law might be redundant? We pass redundant laws all the time to protect business, the flag, privacy etc. but a potentially redundant law to protect gays is seen as unnecessary or even dangerous.

In our legal system we make many distinctions about the ways people kill people. If you think about a murder, plan it and do it, that's one type of crime. Murder one. If you're in a heated argument and things get out of hand, that's another. If you over-respond to a perceived threat that's yet another type. If the crime is premeditated AND you torture your victim, it's pretty high on the list of punishable offenses. It will get you executed in a lot of states. There are many more distinctions when it comes to murder. There are hundreds more distinctions that apply to dozens of other violent crimes. Those distinctions are useful in helping juries reach verdicts and in helping judges decide sentences.

The people who have been killed, injured or intimidated in our country by hate crimes are NOT people who just happened to be in the way of democracy on the march. They were singled out because of who they are or what they believe or how they behave. Their attackers chose them, deliberately. They were chosen because the attacker hated

them. Why then, oh why, is it so difficult to add one more distinction to the legal code? Why is it such a big deal?

You know why it's a big deal, I know why it's a big deal and Congress knows why it's a big deal. It's a big deal because there are just enough voters out there who still think it's OK to discriminate against other citizens, provided they are citizens that you hate. Anyone who says it ain't so is winking and snickering along with their narrow-minded cohorts and, so far, they're getting away with it.

No one is going to stop you from hating whomever you will, but we sure have the right to stop you from acting on it.

So how does a Hate Crimes Bill get linked to a War Funding Bill anyway? What, pray tell, do those two things have in common? Why are they on the same page? Here's why. In order to try to ram it through, the proponents have lumped it with a Bill to continue funding for our approved killings, in Iraq. If the President vetoes the Bill he'll be denying our troops the support they deserve. Everyone seems to have forgotten that bringing the troops home would be far more supportive of them. If the President signs the Bill he'll be going directly against a significant block of voters crucial to his agenda.

Tough stuff. The poor guy will appear to be two faced, either about his noble war, or about his moral high ground. A nasty position to be in, that's for sure. A bed of his own making, that's for sure too. He has been milking these two issues for years. He continues to call the mistake in Iraq a righteous cause and he continues to support the notion that non-heterosexuals are in the way of a moral America. Both are self serving lunches made entirely of baloney. This time the President might just have to choose which one he's going to eat.