

CON: 'Gay agenda' pushed by reformers

By WALTER A. JONES III
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THE RECENT outcry over strengthening Kentucky's hate-crimes law further reveals a trend toward the ultimate goal of militant homosexual activists: the redefinition of marriage and family with governmental enforcement.

As *The Courier-Journal* reported, Kentucky's 2000 hate-crimes law was passed to criminalize offenses such as "intimidation, assault and vandalism" based on an individual's "race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation." However, because Kentucky's law does not cover murder, some are pushing to strengthen it.

The impetus rests largely on the 1998 murders of Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay man who was beaten to death, and James Byrd Jr., an African American who was dragged to death in Jasper, Texas. More recent outcries stem from the murder and robbery of Guinn "Richie" Phillips in Rineyville earlier this year.

While it is important both to grieve these deaths and prosecute the perpetrators, there is no adequate rationale for tightening hate-crimes legislation.

First, hate-crimes laws are not necessary in order to adequately prosecute crimes. Existing laws already cover murder. Both Shepard's and Byrd's killers were convicted and sentenced to death or life in prison — without hate-crimes laws. Besides, true hate crimes, accord-

ing to FBI and state statistics, are rare when compared to the overall crime rate.

Second, hate-crimes laws are inequitable. They establish differing penalties for the same crime, depending on whether the victim was in a protected category. Thus, hate-crimes laws foster an implicit kind of judicial discrimination.

Third, the criteria for hate-crimes laws are not well-defined. Generally, such laws have been enacted to protect those who are vulnerable, but, as *The Courier-Journal* editorialized, there is no evidence that "gays [are] more vulnerable than others to murder or that ... their

cial protection for gays, a larger issue is at stake. The recent history of the infiltration of gay "special rights" — not civil rights — into the military, workplace, home, school, and other areas reveals a trend that underscores that the true goal of homosexual activists is redefining traditional marriage and family.

Gays have already hijacked the civil-rights movement of African Americans (of which the writer is one) by erroneously equating unchangeable biology with personal behavior. True civil rights are those granted by government to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all persons based on innate, immutable, and morally neutral characteristics. Such rights are not based on the preferences and decisions of individuals or groups who wish to identify themselves according to certain lifestyle choices.

The trend is painfully obvious. The recent pursuits and victories of the gay-rights movement are indicative of a gradual progression toward their overarching goal of normalizing homosexual behavior in all social institutions and redefining marriage and family. At risk is the foundational institution responsible for the stability of societies throughout history: monogamous, heterosexual, lifelong marriage. Founding Father Fisher Ames once said, "The known propensity of democracy is to licentiousness which the ambitious call and the ignorant believe to be liberty."

Traditional marriage and family must be sustained as the foundation of social stability, which means working to strengthen it in both law and society, not substituting something else for it.

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murderers [are] less vulnerable to fitting punishment." Laws should punish criminal actions, not the motives of the offender or the class of the victim. Most important, there is a real danger that eventually, so-called "sexual orientation" would become a protected category such that any disapproval or opposition — even verbal — toward gay or lesbian behavior could be considered "hateful" and prosecutable. Under these conditions, the free speech rights of educators, businesspeople, and even pastors preaching against homosexuality would be infringed.

But despite the fuss over spe-