

I thank the gentleman and rise in support of this rule and the underlying legislation.

Hate crimes are real. They spread fear and intimidation among entire communities. This bill would strengthen local law enforcement's ability to prosecute hate crimes based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability to the victim.

It is patently false to say that we're criminalizing thought. We are criminalizing the brutality that results when these thoughts lead to death and serious injury of an innocent victim. This is no more about criminalizing thought than the anti-lynching laws were about criminalizing knot tying.

And to say that pedophilia somehow belongs in here represents such uninformed, illogical and irrelevant thinking as to say kleptomania, drug abuse, school truancy, parking violation and road rage belongs here.

This bill is about hate crimes. This bill has strong support from over 300 civil rights, religious, LGBT, law enforcement and civic organizations, and I'm particularly pleased to identify the support of the Garden State Equality, a group that has fought tirelessly to fight discrimination against all Americans, including discrimination based on gender identity.

I urge support of the rule and the underlying bill.