

MAY 1, 2000

STATEMENT OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JAN SCHAKOWSKY ON *IT'S TIME, ILLINOIS* 5TH ANNUAL REPORT

CHICAGO, IL - I want to congratulate It's Time, Illinois and commend Chair Miranda Stevens-Miller for all the hard work in publishing the 5th Annual Report on Discrimination and Hate Crimes Against Gender Variant People. I am sure it was not an easy task.

This report serves as a reminder to the people of Illinois that some members of our community are at risk of being the victims of hate crimes and discrimination. It clearly illustrates that discrimination based on an individual's gender characteristics or identity is growing in prevalence. We must all work together to end hate crimes against members of our gender variant community in Illinois and throughout the nation.

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I am proud to be the first member of Congress to modify my nondiscrimination policy to include gender variance and am working with other members to promote this policy. It was the right thing to do. And I want to thank Miranda for her help in designing that policy. As an active member of the Human Rights Caucus, it is one of my top priorities to pass tougher laws to combat hate crimes in our communities and to put an end to discrimination. But it is not enough to just act here at home. The United States must make it clear to the whole world that we will not tolerate international human rights abuses against lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals. That is why I am working with Representative Tom Lantos to pass a resolution calling for an end to international human rights abuses based on sexual orientation.

Hate crimes tear at the fabric of our society. It is the responsibility of Congress to step up and make it clear that hate crimes and discrimination committed against our friends, neighbors, and coworkers will be punished to the fullest extent of the law. I am optimistic that this day will come and will continue to work to protect the rights of all Americans.