



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

## Senator Klein And Assemblyman Latimer; 'vandalism Of Houses Of Worship Will Not Be Tolerated'

JEFFREY D. KLEIN October 12, 2006



BRONX, NY – With hate crimes against property increasing according to the FBI, and in the wake of the most recent attack on Saint Francis de Chantal in the Bronx, Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester) and Assemblymen George Latimer (D-Westchester), flanked by Civil Rights and Religious leaders, renewed their urgent call for the passage of legislation increasing the penalties for vandalism of places of worship. The Klein-Latimer

legislation would raise theft or vandalism of a House of Worship from a misdemeanor to a Class E felony, punishable by up to four years in prison.

"I have zero-tolerance for individuals who maliciously attack and destroy our churches, synagogues, temples and mosques," said Senator Klein. "By strengthening the penalties for these intolerable crimes, we can reduce the occurrences of these egregious acts."

"We need the assurance of effective punishment to help deter these terrible acts of intolerance", stated Assemblyman Latimer. "Senator Klein has authored a law that would properly deal with these heinous acts and those that commit them".

Monsignor Leslie Ivers of St. Frances de Chantal added that ,"stricter penalties for desecrating our houses of worship may discourage individuals from committing these types of crimes. I applaud Senator Klein and Assemblyman Latimer for taking a stand and being proactive with this issue."

Anti-Defamation Regional Director, Joel Levy stated, "The Anti-Defamation League condemns, in the strongest terms, the desecration of religious objects at St. Frances de Chantal Catholic Church and School in the Bronx. We stand in solidarity with the Christian community to make clear that such violence will not be tolerated, and support Senator Klein's proposed legislation strengthening the penalty for vandalism against religious artifacts or houses of worship. Such legislation is a necessary deterrent to ensure that we stop such attacks in our own community and around the state."

The Klein bill (S. 6439) would elevate theft and vandalism of a house of worship from a misdemeanor offense punishable by community service, to a Class E felony which can carry a sentence recommendation of 1 ¼ years in prison to 4. The last two Hate Crime Statistics Reports issued by the FBI, displayed an increase in hate crimes against property from 3,139 to 3,333. The New York State Division of Criminal Justice (DCJS) reported 716 hate crimes in 2002, the most recent year which data was available. Nearly half of hate crimes (46%) were motivated by a bias against religious groups. Criminal Mischief constituted 31% of all hate crimes according to DCJS.

The Ant-Defamation League, which tracks incidents of anti-Semitism in New York, found 380 incidents in 2005, with 219 reported in New York City and 23 in Westchester County. Nearly 40% of these incidents (149 in all) involved vandalism