United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 23, 2012

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Mr. Attorney General:

We write to respectfully request that you revise the Hate Crime Incident Report form (1-699) to allow for the collection and tracking of hate crimes committed against Sikh-Americans.

As you are well aware, on August 5th, Wade Michael Page killed six and wounded four other members of the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. From all indications, Page targeted members of the Sikh Temple because of their religion.

This tragic shooting is the latest hate crime committed against Sikhs in the United States. Over the past two years, two Sikhs in California were murdered, a Sikh temple in Michigan was desecrated, a Sikh transit worker in New York City was assaulted, and a Sikh taxi driver in California was severely beaten. According to a recent survey of 1,370 Sikhs living in the California Bay Area, 10% reported being the victim of a hate crime. Sixty-eight percent of those crimes were in the form of physical attacks.

Because many Sikhs wear turbans and do not cut their facial hair, they are often viewed as foreign and are easy to target for harassment and crime. Thus, Sikhs are particularly susceptible to violence committed because of their Sikh identity, even if the perpetrator does not understand that the victim is a Sikh.

Although the limited data available suggests that a disproportionately high rate of violence and other crimes are committed against Sikhs, it is difficult to understand the true scope of the problem because the Department of Justice does not specifically track hate crimes against Sikhs. The Hate Crime Statistics Act requires the Department to maintain data on crimes committed on the basis of religion. Pursuant to this law, the Department publishes the Hate Crime Incident Report for law enforcement agencies to complete when they investigate a

suspected hate crime. That form allows a law enforcement officer to denote that a crime was motivated by a bias against Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, or atheists, among others. The form does not allow an officer to denote that a crime was motivated by a bias against Sikhs.

It is important to collect data on hate crimes committed against Sikhs because this data can identify trends and help federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies properly allocate resources. Until we have a more comprehensive understanding of the number and type of hate crimes committed against Sikhs, our law enforcement agencies will not be able to allocate the appropriate level of personnel and other resources to prevent and respond to these crimes. Moreover, the collection of this information will likely encourage members of the Sikh community to report hate crimes to law enforcement officials.

We urge you to take prompt action to ensure that hate crimes against Sikhs are recorded and tracked. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

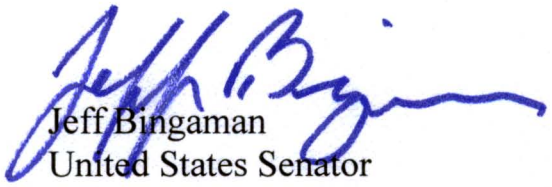
Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

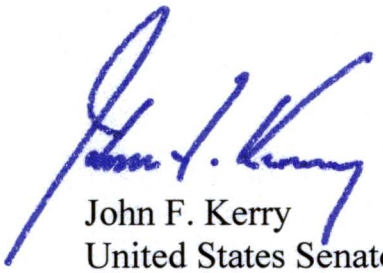
Al Franken
United States Senator

Chris Coons
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

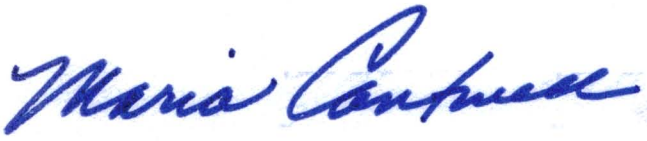


Jeff Bingaman
United States Senator

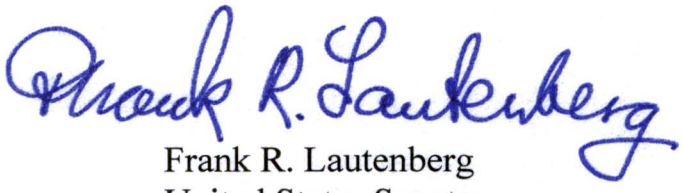


John F. Kerry
United States Senator

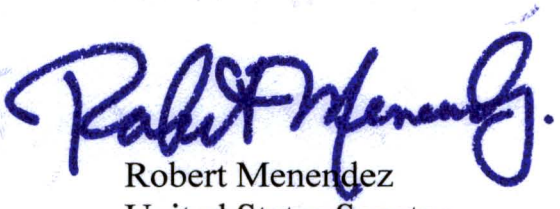
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



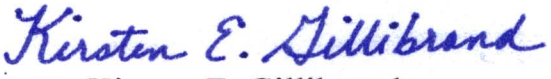
Frank R. Lautenberg
United States Senator



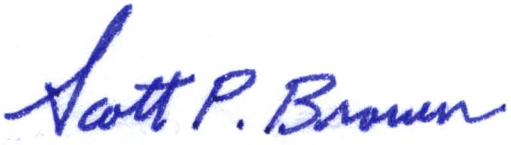
Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

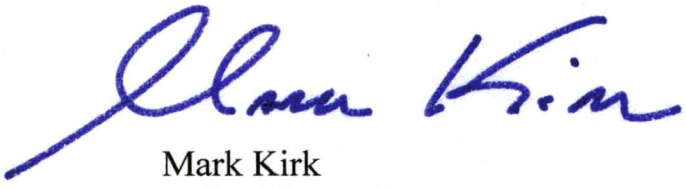
Tom Udall
United States Senator



Kirsten E. Gillibrand
United States Senator



Scott P. Brown
United States Senator



Mark Kirk
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Robert S. Mueller, III
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation