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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: NEW YEAR BRINGS STRONGER HATE CRIMES LAW

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced Illinois' stronger hate crimes law will go into effect Jan. 1. Madigan initiated the measure, which passed the General Assembly with bipartisan support, to better protect Illinois residents from hate crimes.

The legislation, **House Bill 3711 (Public Act 100-0197)**, sponsored by Rep. Litesa Wallace and Sen. Omar Aquino stemmed from a national increase in crimes motivated by hatred based on religion, race, national origin, gender identity and sexual orientation since the 2016 election. The new law expands the list of crimes that can be prosecuted as hate crimes in an effort to address the increasing use of technology to attack victims. Specifically, the new law adds the crimes of cyberstalking, transmission of obscene messages, and certain acts of intimidation to the list of crimes that can be charged and prosecuted as hate crimes. The law also ensures that victims of hate crimes have the ability to file a civil lawsuit in response to these incidents and permits a judge to impose civil penalties on the perpetrator.

"Hate crimes have increased at an alarming rate over the past year. We must not tolerate crimes committed by individuals who are motivated by hatred or bias against others based on their race, religion, national origin, gender identity or sexual orientation," Madigan said. "By offering greater protection for victims of these terrible crimes, this law sends a strong message that hate has no place in Illinois."

In 2016, Chicago Police Department data shows that hate crimes reached a five-year high. In early 2017, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) released a study showing a dramatic 85 percent increase in anti-Semitic incidents, including assaults, vandalism and harassment, during just the first quarter of 2017 compared to the same time period in 2016. The ADL also found that anti-Semitic incidents at non-Jewish elementary, middle and high schools increased 106 percent, and a new anti-Semitic message is posted on social media every 83 seconds.

The law strengthens the Illinois Hate Crimes Act by:

- **Expanding the reach of protection from hate crimes** to address perpetrators' increased use of technology to attack victims. The measure adds the existing crimes of stalking, cyberstalking, transmission of obscene messages and certain acts of intimidation to the list of crimes that can be prosecuted as hate crimes.
- **Ensuring all victims of hate crimes are afforded a civil remedy.** Under Illinois' current hate crimes law, offenses such as telephone harassment, harassment through electronic communications and disorderly conduct do not give rise to a civil cause of action. HB 3711 closes that gap.
- **Allowing judges to impose a civil penalty** of up to \$25,000 for each violation.
- **Providing the Attorney General with civil enforcement authority.** Illinois would join at least six other states that have similar authority.

In February, Attorney General Madigan convened a summit with civil rights leaders to discuss the impact of federal Executive Orders on the nearly 2 million immigrants who live in Illinois. During that summit, Madigan and the civil rights leaders discussed the need to increase protections against hate crimes. As a result of that discussion, Madigan pushed for this legislation.

Attorney General Madigan's [Civil Rights Bureau](#) protects the civil rights of all Illinois residents. The Bureau enforces civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination, works to strengthen the civil rights laws, and participates in community outreach programs. The Bureau also investigates complaints of patterns and practices of discrimination in housing, public accommodations, employment, and financial matters. Attorney General Madigan encourages individuals to contact her office to report instances of discrimination or harassment by calling her Civil Rights Hotline at 1-877-581-3692

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