

# Assembly Bill 266

## Violent felonies: hate crimes

### Assemblymember Jim Cooper

#### SUMMARY

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California law penalizes those convicted of the most heinous acts of hate crimes as serious felonies allowing for early release from prison. AB 266 will reclassify felony hate crimes in which the convicted person is sentenced to state prison as a violent felony, making early release from prison more difficult.

#### BACKGROUND

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Crimes committed based on hate are driven by intolerance and directed at a group or individual having common characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, gender and people with mental or physical disabilities. Hate motivated crimes can include acts such as verbal threats, property damage, assault, and even murder.

In 2019, in Los Angeles alone, violent acts of hate grew to the highest rate since 2008. Among the most notable increases came in violent crimes against Jews (89%), Asians (32%), Transgender persons (64%) and persons of Middle Eastern decent (142%).

Hate crimes can be charged as misdemeanors or felonies. In the most severe cases, a person can be sentenced to state prison. State prison convictions mean the perpetrator acted so violently that victim (s) suffered great injury, both physically and psychologically.

Sadly, these types of convictions are considered non-violent by California law and allow for the convicted to take

advantage of early parole opportunities, only serving a fraction of their sentence.

The ideology of hate usually takes years of indoctrination to build up in an individual leading them to commit acts of violence based on intolerance. Conversely, it could take years through proper rehabilitation to rid an individual of their hatred. In the worse cases of violence, the perpetrator needs more time for rehabilitation, not less.

AB 266 will re-classify the most violent incidents of hate crime convictions from non-violent to violent. Those individuals who are convicted and sent to state prison for the most heinous acts of hate will no longer be eligible for early release in some cases.

#### STATUS

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#### CONTACT

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Mike Ziegler  
Michael.ziegler@asm.ca.gov