Civil Rights Department

Commission on the State of Hate

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Minutes

Commission on the State of Hate

July 23, 2025, 9:00 am

Commissioners Present
Chair Brian Levin
Vice Chair Andrea Beth Damsky
Commissioner Regina Cuellar
Commissioner Cynthia Choi
Commissioner Cece Feiler
Commissioner Bamby Salcedo

Civil Rights Department (CRD) Staff Present
Kevin Kish, Director
Rishi Khalsa, Deputy Director of Communications
Alec Watts, Assistant Deputy Director
Rebecca Goodsell, Research Data Specialist
David Kalkstein, Research Data Specialist
Kevin Thomas, Research Data Specialist
Monica Chavez, Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Shilpa Ram, Assistant General Counsel
Kendra Tanacea, Attorney Mediator

Others Present
An estimated 29 members of the public attended virtually.

I. Welcome

A. Call to Order

Chair Levin called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.

He welcomed everyone to the California Commission on the State of Hate's July meeting. He shared that translated closed captioning is available for this meeting.

B. Establishment of a Quorum

Assistant Deputy Director Watts conducted the roll call.

C. Review of the Agenda

Chair Levin reviewed the agenda and public comment process.

II. Informational Presentation: "Advancing Understanding of Hate Crimes and Community Resilience"

Nadia Aziz, Senior Program Director, Fighting Hate and Bias Program at The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Nadia Aziz presented the following:

- The FBI's annual hate crime data is significantly underreported because reporting is voluntary for law enforcement agencies, and many victims don't report these crimes. However, the data does show a steady increase in reported hate crimes from 2014 to 2023.
- For the past few years, the FBI estimates that there are between 11,000 and 12,000 reported hate crimes annually, but other federal data sources estimate that 200,000 to 250,000 hate crime victimizations occur every year (about 28 per hour).
- Anti-Black and anti-African American hate crimes are the most frequent, while anti-Jewish hate crimes are the most common religious-based offenses. Reported hate crimes against members of the LGBTQ+ community are also high.
- The Department of Justice has canceled over $30 million in hate crime grants.
- The Supporting Community Resilience resource was created to help municipalities address hate crimes by fostering resilient communities. In the context of hate crimes, a resilient community is one that is inclusive, has anti-hate infrastructure, and meets the diverse needs of victims and survivors.
- The Supporting Community Resilience resource is directly informed by the experiences of victims and survivors of hate crimes and was drafted in partnership with individuals who have lost loved ones to hate.
- The presentation highlighted the importance of preventing secondary victimization and ensuring resources and information are not just shared with victims but also understood by victims.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Choi asked how municipalities can respond to increasing distrust in government, particularly among immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities, to ensure people still report hate crimes and seek services.

Nadia Aziz recommended that municipalities maintain a list of service providers outside of law enforcement and increase collaboration with community-based organizations, noting that distrust in law enforcement is growing.

Commissioner Salcedo highlighted the severe underreporting of anti-trans hate crimes, citing an increase in Los Angeles, and asked for strategies to combat a national administration that is fueling hate and defunding programs that support victims.

Nadia Aziz responded by encouraging all law enforcement agencies to report data to the FBI and praised the Commission's work as a model for other states. She noted that combating federal defunding is a challenge and urged state and local governments to increase their own funding for these efforts.

Chair Levin thanked Nadia Aziz and asked for her thoughts on how states and municipalities can coordinate with NGOs when government entities are not cooperative.

Nadia Aziz replied that oversight of federal agencies is a challenge and that many canceled grants were from bipartisan-supported legislation. She recommended that local and state governments create hate crime task forces that include law enforcement, community organizations, and directly impacted communities to build a stronger local infrastructure.

Vice Chair Damsky asked for recommendations on how to support children separated from their parents, especially regarding the need for information to be understood by the community.

Nadia Aziz emphasized the importance of trauma-informed training and making sure that critical information is available in as many different ways as possible to ensure it is understood by diverse groups, including children and people with disabilities. She also reiterated the need to rely on victim advocates and community organizations.

III. Approval of the Minutes

A. May 22, 2025, Community Forum

Commissioner Cuellar moved to approve the minutes; Vice Chair Damsky seconded.

Action by the Commission

Ayes: 6 (Chair Levin, Vice Chair Damsky, Commissioner Choi, Commissioner Cuellar, Commissioner Feiler, Commissioner Salcedo)
Nays: 0

B. May 28, 2025, Commission Meeting

Vice Chair Damsky moved to approve the minutes; Commissioner Salcedo seconded.

Action by the Commission

Ayes: 7 (Chair Levin, Vice Chair Damsky, Commissioner Choi, Commissioner Cuellar, Commissioner Feiler, Commissioner Salcedo)
Nays: 0

Links sent in the Chat:

https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2025/07/CSH-Community-Forum-Minutes-May-22-2025.pdf

https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2025/07/CSH-Meeting-Minutes-May-28-2025.pdf

IV. Chair, Vice Chair, and Subcommittees Updates and Discussion

A. Chair Brian Levin

Updates provided by Chair Levin:

- Acknowledged Disability Pride Month.
- Encouraged signing up for the Commission's listserv to receive announcements and reports.
- Reminded everyone of the CA vs. Hate Resource Line and Network and the Community Conflict Resolution Unit services.

Links Sent in the Chat:

https://www.cavshate.org/

https://calcivilrights.ca.gov/community-conflict-resolution-unit/
CCRU@calcivilrights.ca.gov

B. **Subcommittee on Patterns, Trends, and Prevention**

Updates provided by Commissioner Choi:

- The subcommittee concluded its partnership with UCLA's Initiative to Study Hate, which included projects on media reports of hate, offender motivations, and rehabilitation programs.
- The findings from the UCLA partnership are being reviewed by staff and will be incorporated into the upcoming annual report.
- The subcommittee is continuing its partnership with Joe Walther at UC Santa Barbara to research online hate, including two literature reviews and a field experiment.
- The subcommittee plans to bring in experts and information from this research for the benefit of the Commission and the public.

C. **Subcommittee on Resources, Support, and Response**

Updates provided by Commissioner Salcedo:

- The subcommittee met with Sergeant Anthony Casper from the Solano County Sheriff's Department to discuss the challenges small and mid-sized agencies face in reporting hate crimes and collecting data.
- The subcommittee is researching the effectiveness of bystander intervention training programs.
- CRD staff are working with POST to revise a hate crime training program for law enforcement.
- Vice Chair Damsky has transitioned off the subcommittee

Vice Chair Damsky thanked Commissioner Salcedo for the kind words.

D. **Subcommittee on Community Forums**

Updates provided by Commissioner Cuellar:

- The August forum on dialogue across difference will be rescheduled to September.
- A forum on disability and hate in schools will be held in Pasadena, with a target date of October 25th.
- A forum on hate in rural communities will be held in Redding, California, following a recent hate incident there. Specific dates are still being finalized.

Commission Discussion

Assistant Deputy Director Alec Watts announced that Commissioner Southers will be transitioning onto the Subcommittee on Resources, Support, and Response.

Vice Chair Damsky and Commissioner Salcedo expressed their enthusiasm for Commissioner Southers joining the subcommittee.

Chair Levin shared his appreciation for Commissioner Southers joining the subcommittee and introduced Police Chief John Gutierrez, who was representing Commissioner Southers during this meeting.

Chief John Gutierrez thanked Chair Levin.

V. Online Hate Update

Chair Levin discussed the following information:

- The departure of Twitter's CEO following an incident where the AI platform "Grok" generated antisemitic content.
- The issue of AI-generated content that is indistinguishable from reality exacerbates polarization and anger.
- Examples of online hate, including a user with a Hitler-related handle and swastika, and a post mocking a funeral procession.
- A fake AI video that aired on television, demonstrating how AI can spread misinformation and subvert reality.
- Bots are now doing the work of sowing division, and a lack of moderation and fact-checking on popular platforms has made the situation worse.

Commission Discussion

Vice Chair Damsky stated that hate is proliferating on social media and in communities, as hate language becomes more commonplace and intense. She discussed specific examples from her local community in San Diego and requested that the Commission continue to monitor the impact of online hate.

VI. **Discussion and Action: Commission Expert Presentation Video Archiving**

Chair Levin proposed creating shorter highlight videos of presentations from meetings and public forums to make content more accessible, with the caveat of available personnel and resources.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Feiler expressed concern about overburdening staff with additional video editing tasks, noting that recordings are already available. She supported the discussion on violence against unhoused individuals, particularly noting that women and transgender young people in encampments face high rates of attack.

Commissioner Cuellar suggested adding timestamps to existing video recordings for easier navigation to specific presentations, rather than creating new, shorter videos.

VII. Discussion of Policies on Undocumented and Homeless California Residential

Chair Levin initiated a discussion on the decreasing legal protections and high victimization rates for undocumented and homeless Californians. He stated that he would like the Commission to invite experts and those with lived experience to further discuss this topic at future meetings.

Commission Discussion

Commissioner Feiler voiced support for what Chair Levin shared and shared that violence among unhoused individuals is also a problem. She also shared that unhoused women and transgender youth have some of the highest rates of victimization.

Public Comment

A public commenter stated that anti-unhoused violence highlights structural and economic injustices. They encouraged the Commission to continue addressing the civil and human rights of the unhoused.

VIII. Discussion of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Chair Levin highlighted instances of limiting the civil rights and civil liberties of transgender athletes and service members. He also discussed federal court rulings affirming rights for all individuals. He referenced the Breonna Taylor case as an example of a lack of justice, mentioning that a federal civil rights prosecutor recommended a minimal sentence for an officer involved.

IX. Remembrance for Texas Flood Victims

Chair Levin offered condolences and support for the victims of the Texas floods and acknowledged the assistance of rescuers from both California and Mexico.

X. **Commission Member Announcements**

Commissioner Salcedo announced the "Walk for Humanity" event on Sunday, August 24, at 9:00 am in Silver Lake, as a fundraiser for TransLatina.

Commissioner Choi announced the release of the new Stop AAPI Hate report on the state of hate incidents in California affecting the AAPI community, with a focus on the Pacific Islander population.

Ex Officio Commissioner Damon Brown shared that the DOJ is having a CARE community briefing on July 30th to discuss the 2024 DOJ hate crime report.

Links Sent in the Chat:

https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/walter-testimony.pdf
https://oversight.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Walter-Written-Testimony.pdf

XI. Future Agenda Items

No discussion on future agenda items.

XII. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

No public comment on items not on the agenda.

XIII. Adjournment of the Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 11:11 am.