
News Release

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MP Brian Storseth Stands Up to Protect Freedom of Speech

OTTAWA – Member of Parliament Brian Storseth successfully defended his private members bill, Bill C-304: *An Act to Amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (Protecting Freedom)*, in its first hour of debate in the House of Commons on November 22, 2011.

Bill C-304 was introduced into the House of Commons on September 30, 2011 and calls for the repealing of Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) in order to protect the fundamental human right to freedom of speech.

Section 13 of the CHRA is intended to protect individuals from discriminatory acts of hate messages. This section, however, has alternatively been used to address differing values or opinions and directly impedes upon the basic human right to freedom of speech, as guaranteed by Section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 2(b) of the Charter states that every individual has the fundamental “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.”

MP Brian Storseth opened the debate on Bill C-304, stating that “this bill will help protect and enhance our fundamental freedoms, the freedom of speech.” Storseth continued to express the importance of freedom of speech, adding that it “is the only real tool that democratic societies like ours have to fight bigotry and ignorance.” Minister of Justice Rob Nicholson has reinforced the Conservative government’s support for Bill C-304, stating that “our government believes Section 13 is not an appropriate or effective means of combating hate propaganda. We believe the Criminal Code is the best vehicle to prosecute these crimes.”

Preventing the distribution of hate messages is of great importance and is explicitly addressed in the Criminal Code of Canada under Sections 318 – 320.1. The continued use of the Criminal Code to address hate messaging will ensure that all individuals are protected from threatening acts of hate messaging through a transparent and democratic process, while preserving the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

Bill C-304 will enter its second and final hour of debate early this spring, at which point the House of Commons will vote on the future of this bill.

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