The FBI’s Civil Rights Program
All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.

— Martin Luther King Jr.
The FBI is the primary federal agency responsible for investigating all allegations regarding violations of federal civil rights statutes. These laws are designed to protect the civil rights of all persons, both United States citizens and non-citizens within United States’ territory. In 2002, the FBI identified the Civil Rights Program as the fifth investigative priority overall, and the second priority within our Criminal Investigative Division. This prioritization continues to date, helping to support the mission of the Civil Rights Program to enforce federal civil rights statutes and to ensure the protected civil rights of all persons in the United States are not abridged.

To address these concerns effectively, the Civil Rights Program has been divided into three subprograms. In order of priority, these subprograms are: Hate Crimes, Color of Law Violations, and the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act. The Hate Crimes subprogram is designated as our highest priority due to the impact these types of crimes can have on entire communities.

Collaboration plays a vital role in effectively engaging civil rights issues throughout the country. Many of our civil rights investigations are greatly enhanced by joint efforts with our federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement partners. Nationwide, the FBI participates in task forces and working groups focused on major civil rights threats. The FBI also works closely with community and civic organizations at the local and national levels.

FBI Priorities

- Protect the United States from terrorist attack
- Protect the United States against foreign intelligence operations and espionage
- Protect the United States against cyber-based attacks and high-technology crimes
- Combat public corruption at all levels
- Protect civil rights
- Combat transnational and national criminal organizations and enterprises
- Combat major white-collar crime
- Combat significant violent crime
Hate Crimes

A hate crime is often described as a crime against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by the offender’s bias against a characteristic of the victim or property.

While the First Amendment to the Constitution does allow for the free expression of both offensive and hateful speech, this protection is not extended to criminal acts based on intolerance or to purposefully intimidating speech or actions which could be interpreted by a reasonable person to be a serious intent to cause harm.

Traditionally, FBI investigations of hate crimes were limited to crimes in which this bias was based on race, color, religion, or national origin. Investigations were further restricted to those wherein the victim was engaged in a federally protected activity. With the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009, the Bureau became authorized to investigate these crimes without this prohibition. This landmark legislation also allowed for the investigation of hate crimes committed against those based on biases of actual or perceived sexual orientation, disability, gender, or gender identity.

The FBI investigates hundreds of hate crime cases every year and works to detect and deter further incidents through law enforcement training, public outreach, and partnerships with a myriad of community groups.
### Federal Hate Crimes Statutes


Prohibits willfully causing bodily injury (or attempting to do so using fire, a firearm, or another dangerous weapon), when (1) the crime was committed because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, or national origin of any person, or (2) the crime was committed because of the actual or perceived religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability of any person and the crime affected interstate or foreign commerce or occurred within federal special maritime and territorial jurisdiction.

**Federally Protected Activities (18 U.S.C. § 245)**

Makes it unlawful to willfully injure, intimidate or interfere with a person, or to attempt to do so, by force or threat of force, because of that other person’s race, color, religion or national origin and because of his/her participation in a public school or university, a benefit/program administered by a state/local government, employment, juror duty in state court, the use of a facility of interstate commerce, a public accommodation or place of exhibition or entertainment.

**Damage to Religious Property; Obstruction of Persons in the Free Exercise of Religious Beliefs (18 U.S.C. § 247)**

Prohibits anyone from intentionally defacing, damaging or destroying religious real property because of the religious nature of the property, so long as the crime is committed in or affects interstate commerce. The statute also prohibits anyone from intentionally obstructing or attempting to obstruct, by force or threat of force, a person in the enjoyment of that person’s religious beliefs, where the crime is committed in or affects interstate commerce. Finally, the statute prohibits anyone from intentionally defacing, damaging or destroying any religious real property because of the race, color, or ethnic characteristics of any individual associated with the property, regardless of any connection to interstate or foreign commerce.

**Criminal Interference with Right to Fair Housing (42 U.S.C. § 3631)**

Makes it unlawful for an individual to use force or threaten to use force to injure, intimidate, or interfere with, or attempt to injure, intimidate, or interfere with, any person’s housing rights because of that person’s race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status or national origin.

**Conspiracy Against Rights (18 U.S.C. § 241)**

Makes it unlawful for two or more persons to agree together to injure, threaten, or intimidate a person in any state, territory or district in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him/her by the Constitution or the laws of the United States, (or because of his/her having exercised the same).
Color of Law

Color of law violations are defined as actions taken by any person using the authority given to them by a local, state, tribal, or federal government agency to willfully deprive someone of a right, privilege, or immunity secured or protected by the Constitution of the United States.

The FBI investigates color of law violations alleged to have been committed by any such person operating both within and beyond the limits of their lawful authority, including off-duty conduct, if the official asserted his or her official position in some way. These investigations encompass crimes such as excessive use of force, theft, sexual assault, failure to keep from harm, deprivation of medical attention, presentation of false evidence, and conspiracy committed by federal agents, police officers, judges, government attorneys, probation and corrections officers, as well as civilians acting at the direction of a public official. The FBI takes all color of law allegations seriously, as the abuse of authority by public officials undermines the foundation of our democracy.

Results of our investigations are forwarded to the local United States Attorney’s Office and to the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., who decide whether or not to prosecute the implicated party.
Federal Color of Law Statutes

Makes it a crime for a person acting under color of any law to willfully deprive a person of a right or privilege protected by the Constitution or laws of the United States. For the purpose of Section 242, acts under “color of law” include acts not only done by federal, state, or local officials within the their lawful authority, but also acts done beyond the bounds of that official’s lawful authority, if the acts are done while the official is purporting to or pretending to act in the performance of his/her official duties. Persons acting under color of law within the meaning of this statute include police officers, prisons guards and other law enforcement officials, as well as judges, care providers in public health facilities, and others who are acting as public officials.

Conspiracy Against Rights (18 U.S.C. § 241)
Makes it unlawful for two or more persons to agree together to injure, threaten, or intimidate a person in any state, territory or district in the free exercise or enjoyment of any right or privilege secured to him/her by the Constitution or the laws of the United States (or because of his/her having exercised the same).

False Statements (18 U.S.C. § 1001)
Constitutes a broad prohibition against anyone who knowingly and willfully (1) falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact; (2) makes any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation; or (3) makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or entry.

Tampering With a Witness, Victim, or an Informant / Obstruction of Justice (18 U.S.C. § 1512)
Constitutes a broad prohibition against tampering with a witness, victim or informant. It proscribes conduct intended to illegitimately affect the presentation of evidence in Federal proceedings or the communication of information to Federal law enforcement officers.

False Declarations Before a Grand Jury or Court / Perjury (18 U.S.C. § 1623)
States that whoever under oath (or in any declaration, certificate, verification, or statement under penalty of perjury) in any proceeding before or ancillary to any court or grand jury of the United States knowingly makes any false material declaration or makes or uses any other information, including any book, paper, document, record, recording, or other material, knowing the same to contain any false material declaration.
The FACE Act was signed into law in 1994 to protect patients and health care providers against violence and threats due to their affiliation with reproductive health care facilities.

Violence targeting these facilities had been steadily increasing from the mid 1970s and culminated in the 1993 murder of Dr. David Gunn by an anti-abortion activist outside of a clinic in Pensacola, Florida. Since the passage of the FACE Act, the number of violent crimes committed by anti-abortion activists has decreased dramatically.

Specifically, the FACE Act statute makes it a federal crime to injure, intimidate, or interfere with those seeking to obtain or provide reproductive health care services – including through assault, murder, physical blockades, and making threatening phone calls and mailings. This law also prohibits damaging or destroying any facility because reproductive health services are provided within.

It is not considered a FACE Act violation to exercise First Amendment rights by protesting outside of a facility, including carrying signs, singing hymns, distributing literature, and shouting - as long as no threats are communicated.
Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act Statutes


Makes it unlawful for a person to use (or attempt to use) force, threat of force, or physical obstruction to intentionally injure or intimidate a person because he/she is or has been obtaining or providing reproductive health services. This statute also makes it unlawful for a person to intentionally damage or destroy the property of a facility because it provides reproductive health services.

**Other Federal Statutes Considered in (FACE) Act Investigations**

**Arson or Bombing (18 U.S.C. § 844(h))**

Enhances the penalty for committing a felony if said crime is committed using a fire or explosive.

**Interstate Communications / Ransom or Threats (18 U.S.C. § 875(c))**

Prohibits the transmission in interstate or foreign commerce a threat to kidnap or injure any person. This statute applies to both interstate and foreign telephone calls and other communications.

**Mailing Threatening Communications (18 U.S.C. § 876(c))**

Prohibits causing the mailing by the Postal Service of matter which contains a threat to kidnap or injure any person either with or without the intent to extort.

**Possession or Use of a Firearm During the Commission of a Violent Crime (18 U.S.C. § 924(c))**

Enhances the penalty for any federal violent crime during which the perpetrator uses, carries or possesses a firearm.
While the FBI investigates civil rights violations, the decision to prosecute allegations of civil rights violations is made by the local United States Attorney’s Office or by the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

The FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program collects and manages hate crime data voluntarily submitted by city, county, college and university, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies. While facts and figures cannot convey the suffering experienced by victims of hate crimes, they demonstrate the dedication and commitment of the law enforcement community to recognize and document crimes that are prompted by hate.

If you believe you have been the victim of a civil rights violation, or if you have direct knowledge of one, contact your local FBI office. However, if you are in immediate danger, always contact Emergency Services and your local police department by dialing “9-1-1”.

For more information on the FBI’s Civil Rights Program, please visit www.fbi.gov.

Points to Consider

FBI Field Office Contact Information

Albany, NY 518-465-7551
Albuquerque, NM 505-889-1300
Anchorage, AK 907-276-4441
Atlanta, GA 404-679-9000
Baltimore, MD 410-265-8080
Birmingham, AL 205-326-6166
Boston, MA 617-742-5533
Buffalo, NY 716-856-7800
Charlotte, NC 704-672-6100
Chicago, IL 312-421-6700
Cincinnati, OH 513-421-4310
Cleveland, OH 216-522-1400
Columbia, SC 803-551-4200
Dallas, TX 972-559-5000
Denver, CO 303-629-7171
Detroit, MI 313-965-2323
El Paso, TX 915-832-5000
Honolulu, HI 808-566-4300
Houston, TX 713-693-5000
Indianapolis, IN 317-595-4000
Jackson, MS 601-948-5000
Jacksonville, FL 904-248-7000
Kansas City, MO (816) 512-8200
Knoxville, TN 865-544-0751
Las Vegas, NV 702-385-1281
Little Rock, AR 501-221-9100
Los Angeles, CA 310-477-6565
Louisville, KY 502-263-6000
Memphis, TN 901-747-4300
Miami, FL 305-944-9101
Milwaukee, WI 414-276-4684
Minneapolis, MN 612-553-9000
Mobile, AL 251-438-3674
Newark, NJ 973-792-3000
New Haven, CT 203-777-6311
New Orleans, LA 504-816-3000
New York, NY 212-384-1000
Norfolk, VA 757-455-0100
Oklahoma City, OK 405-290-7770
Omaha, NE 402-493-8688
Philadelphia, PA 215-418-4000
Phoenix, AZ 623-466-1999
Pittsburgh, PA 412-432-4000
Portland, OR 503-224-4181
Richmond, VA 804-261-1044
Sacramento, CA 916-481-9110
Salt Lake City, UT 801-579-1400
San Antonio, TX 210-225-6741
San Diego, CA 858-320-1800
San Francisco, CA 415-553-7400
San Juan, PR 787-754-6000
Seattle, WA 206-622-0460
Springfield, IL 217-522-9675
St. Louis, MO 314-231-4324
Tampa, FL 813-253-1000
Washington, DC 202-278-2000

Federal Bureau of Investigation
935 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20535

WWW.FBI.GOV