



MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

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Senator Russell Misrepresents Bill Obstructing Federal Hate Crimes Law

Sen. Steve Russell in a [“Letter to the Editor” to the Tulsa World](#) today misleads people on the implications of [SB 1965](#). This letter is in response to the [World's editorial](#) that ran Monday, denouncing SB 1965.

In his letter, Sen. Russell writes that SB 1965 “defines what constitutes criminal speech under Oklahoma law.” SB 1965 mentions free speech once in the last paragraph – at the end of 13 pages of a convoluted bill preventing law enforcement agencies from granting access to law enforcement records to federal agencies attempting to enforce federal hate crimes laws (18 U.S.C. Section 245). Additionally, this bill seeks to block Oklahoma law enforcement from seeking the federal funds that the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act provides in investigating hate crimes.

Senator Russell can say SB 1965 is an effort to protect freedom of speech all he wants. That is his right under the First Amendment. But it doesn't make it true.

To read SB 1965, visit <http://tinyurl.com/SB1965> .

For more information about what SB 1965 does, visit <http://tinyurl.com/SB1965intro> .

To read why you should oppose SB 1965, visit <http://tinyurl.com/WhyOpposeSB1965>.

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The Equality Network works to achieve equality and to secure legal protection for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Oklahomans through advocacy, coalition building and individual empowerment in the policy process.