

US Senate passes bill to fight hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

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The US Senate recently passed a bill that would help combat the rise of hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, a bipartisan denunciation of such violence during the coronavirus pandemic and a modest step toward legislating in a chamber where most of President Joe Biden's agenda has stalled.

The measure would expedite the review of hate crimes and provide support for local law enforcement in response to thousands of reported violent incidents in the past year.

Key Highlights

- Police have seen a noted uptick in such crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. That includes the February death of an 84 year-old man who was pushed to the ground near his home in San Francisco; a young family that was attacked in a Texas grocery store last year; and deadly shootings last month in Atlanta, where six of the victims were of Asian descent.
- These unprovoked, random attacks and incidents are happening in supermarkets, on our streets, in takeout restaurants — basically, wherever we are, said Democratic Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, the legislation's lead sponsor.
- The changes would replace language in the original bill that called for guidance describing best practices to mitigate racially discriminatory language in describing the COVID19 pandemic.
- The legislation would require the government to issue guidance aimed at raising awareness of hate crimes during the pandemic to address some GOP concerns about policing speech.

- It's unclear whether the bipartisan bill is a sign of things to come in the Senate, where Republicans and Democrats have fundamental differences and often struggle to work together.
- Under an agreement struck by Senate leaders at the start of the year, Republicans and Democrats pledged to try to at least try to debate bills and see if they could reach agreement through the legislative process. The hate crimes legislation is the first byproduct of that agreement. Some said it need not be the last.

SOURCE: *The New Indian Express, Business Standard*