

Testimony of Congressman Randy Weber (TX-14)
Before the House Judiciary Committee – Member Day
September 20, 2019

Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to discuss priorities and issues of importance to the constituents I represent in the fourteenth district of Texas. I sincerely hope my testimony will resonate with each of you sitting here today.

On November 5, 2017, a gunman opened fired on a group of churchgoers at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Twenty-six lives were taken, including an unborn child, and 20 more were wounded. On August 3, 2019, a gunman walked into a Walmart in El Paso, Texas and shot and killed twenty-two people and injured twenty-four. Following the events of El Paso, Texas experienced another tragedy in the city of Odessa when eight were killed and twenty-five injured.

While the attacks just mentioned all occurred in Texas, domestic terrorism and hate are not confined by state lines.

While these crimes appear to meet the existing federal definition of domestic terrorism—a crime of violence intended “to intimidate or coerce a civilian population,” or “to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, or kidnapping”¹—those responsible cannot be charged with a terrorism crime. This is because there is no federal terrorism crime that applies to acts that meet the definition of domestic terrorism in federal criminal code.

To address this inadequacy, I introduced H.R. 4187, the Domestic Terrorism Penalties Act of 2019. My bill seeks to fill the gap that currently exists in federal criminal code by establishing penalties for crimes of domestic terrorism. H.R. 4187 provides federal law enforcement officers and

¹ 18 USC 2331(5)

prosecutors the resources necessary to combat this growing threat. The Domestic Terrorism Penalties Act of 2019 is endorsed by the FBI Agents Association (FBIAA). FBIAA is composed of 14,000 Special Agent members—including approximately 90 percent active Special Agents.

May 18, 2018 is a date that will forever haunt the tight-knit community of Santa Fe, Texas, located right in the heart of my district. On that day, ten innocent lives were taken and thirteen were injured at Santa Fe high school.

Our country is experiencing a crisis that has escalated at an alarming rate. Twenty-four-hour news cycles, and the viral nature of social media are sensationalizing mass shootings, inspiring new acts of mass violence nationally. The shocking uptick in this type of violent crime should invoke federal interest.

H.R. 4207, Justice for Victims of School Shootings Act builds upon the existing federal crime of discharging a firearm in a school zone,² by adding enhanced penalties for, in the course of discharging a firearm in a school zone, “causes harm to or the death of a person through the use of a firearm.”³ Should this bill be enacted, it would be a federal crime to commit a shooting at a school which provides elementary or secondary education, as well as at a college, university, or other postsecondary institution.

A national crisis merits a national response. The families and loved ones of victims deserve justice. This legislation arms prosecutors with the necessary tools to not only bring justice to victims and their families, but to protect all Americans by enhancing penalties for existing laws.

² 18 USC 922(q)(3)

³ [H.R. 4187, Justice for Victims of School Shootings Act](#)

I would like to once again thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and committee as a whole for the invitation to discuss some of the most important issues of our time. Before I close, I would like to simply say that if any member—Democrat or Republican—has a desire to discuss either of the pieces of legislation mentioned today or engage on the issue, I would welcome that conversation. We stand at a crossroads. Our country is hurting, and it is time for Congress to get our priorities straight. Chairman Nadler, you and you alone can allow for the consideration of these pieces of legislation. I sincerely hope you will choose to prioritize justice for victims of mass violence.