

Hip Hop Organizers and Activists Voice Objections to HB 2712

Written by Westside ID4230

Tuesday, 25 March 2008 11:32 -

Hip Hop organizers and activists in Washington state have been turning up the heat behind demanding Gov. Christine Gregoire veto [House Bill 2712](#) , the anti-gang legislation immediately. In the past few weeks, Hip Hop grassroots media outlets

[Zulu Radio](#),

The

[Keith Tucker Show](#)

, and

[Hip Hop 101 TV](#)

have all done features on the issue, urging their viewers and listeners to

[SIGN THE PETITION TO VETO THE GANG BILL](#)

, and call the offices of Governor Gregoire at (360) 902-4111

to voice objections.

From the jump, it was apparent to many hip hop activists, youth advocates and human rights activists that this bill would unfairly criminalize young people in our communities, especially young people of color. In [an informational video](#) by James Bible and Priest Amen, featuring music from

[Rajni Eddins](#) , [Blue Scholars](#) ,

and

[Gabriel Teodros](#)

, the commentators outline concerns surrounding the bill. They summarize how HB 2712 will legitimize racial profiling, stereotype culturally-relevant non-violent behavior as gang-related, lean too heavily on increasing arrests and creating harsher punishments, and completely lack to acknowledge the root causes of gang activity in young people.

Despite this, HB 2712 passed House by a 94-1 margin in early March, largely because the original bill promised \$10 million dollars for intervention programs separate in addition to competitive grants for law enforcement agencies. Sadly but not surprisingly, while the money on the law enforcement side survived Senate, the money for intervention did not.

On March 24th, the **Coalition of Citizens for Justice**, made up of members of the NAACP, the National Black United Front,

[SYPP](#) ,

Justice Works, and others, met with the governor's aide, Marty Brown, to voice their concerns. Gregoire was unable to attend the meeting. "He seemed really nonchalant about it," said Priest Amen, "we were concerned about his demeanor, and we hope he took our concerns about the bill seriously." So far, the coalition has gained the support of Senator Adam Kline, and King Council Member Larry Gossett, as well as held press conferences to raise awareness on the bill.

Despite the success of these informational campaigns in building a strong base of support for the veto, it still remains unclear whether or not our voices have fallen on deaf ears in the governor's office. The bill will cross her desk on March 28th, but she has until April 5th to either sign or veto it. As a last effort, the Coalition of Citizens for Justice is planning a rally later this week, either on Friday or Saturday. You can email [Priest97@msn.com](mailto: Priest97@msn.com) for more information.

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When asked what the coalition will do if the bill is passed and the legislation becomes law, Priest Amen asserted that the group is well-equipt and prepared to challenge the constitutionality of the bill in court. They also plan to organize a group to push for the removal of Governor Christie Gregoire. "We need a governor who will be more accountable to the concerns of the youth, of low income people, people of color- the full diversity of Washington State."