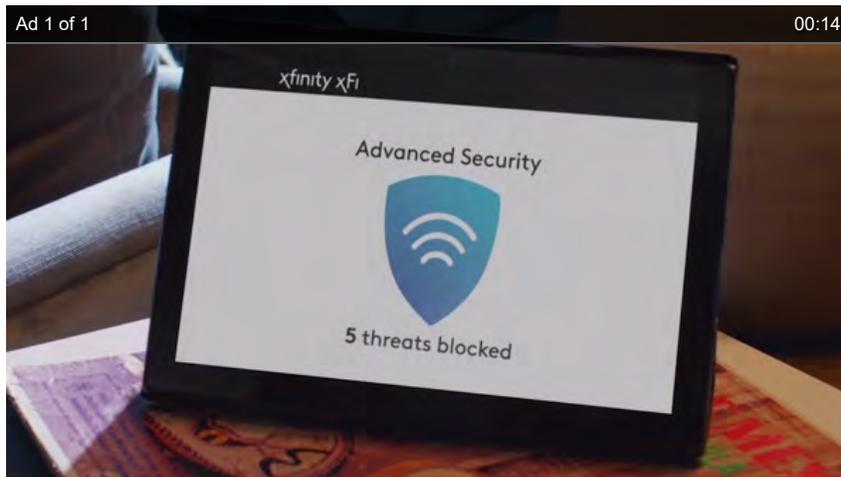


# Emmett Till bill making lynching a federal crime passes House

*The bill passed 410 to 4.*

By **Ella Torres**

February 26, 2020, 3:28 PM • 6 min read



## House passes anti-lynching bill 65 years after the death of Emmett Till

*The anti-lynching act seeks to make lynching a federal hate crime.*

AP, FILE

A bill to make lynching a hate crime under federal law passed the House on Wednesday, making it the first attempt since 1900 poised to successfully make its way through Congress.

The legislature is titled the Emmett Till Anti-lynching Act, an ode to Till, a 14-year-old African American boy who was kidnapped, beaten and lynched in 1955 after he was accused of whistling at a white woman.

The vote was 410-4. The members who voted against were Independent Rep. Justin Amash and Republican Reps. Louie Gohmert, Thomas Massie and Ted Yoho.

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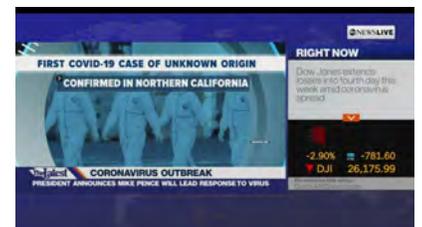


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 An undated photo shows Emmett Louis Till, whose body was found in the Tallahatchie River near the Delta community of Money, Miss., Aug. 31, 1955.

AP, FILE

Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill., who introduced the bill in January 2019, said it will finally outlaw "an American evil."

"Today, we send a strong message that violence -- and race-based violence, in particular -- has no place in America," Rush said in a statement.

He spoke about his decision to name the bill after Till, saying the boy was from his district in Chicago and that the now-iconic image of him in his casket "created an indelible imprint on my brain, on my spirit."

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"It made me conscious of the risk, the trepidation of being a black man in America," Rush said at a press conference.

The bill describes lynching as an act willfully done by a collection of people who assemble with the intent to commit violence on another human and then cause that person's death, according to a copy of the bill.



 House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., center, is flanked by Rep. Bobby Rush, D-Ill., left, and Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, during a news... [more](#)

J. Scott Applewhite/AP

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer classified lynching as "the premeditated, extrajudicial killing by a mob or group of people to instill fear."

"Lynching is a blot on the history of America, but the even greater blot is the silence that for too long maintained in the context of what people knew was happening," he said at the press conference, calling the bill "long overdue."

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Lynchings were used in the U.S., predominantly in the South, from the 1880s to 1960s to terrorize black Americans. From 1882-1968, 4,743 lynchings occurred in the U.S., with 3,446 involving victims who were black, according to the [NAACP](#).

"This form of terrorism was used to kill black people and terrorize and terrify those into understanding they were not considered humans," Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., said at the press conference.



She notes that though there are fewer lynchings in recent history, there have been recent reports of [nooses drawn in classrooms](#) and [locker rooms](#).

"A vicious reminder that the past isn't ever that far away," Bass said.

The bill had bipartisan support.

Rep. Doug Collins, R-Ga., said "this will ensure that those who engage in mob violence are held accountable."

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Rush said it is expected to pass the Senate by the end of the week, before the end of Black History Month, and then makes its way to the Oval Office.

Asked if they believed Trump would sign the bill, Bass said, "How could he not?"

*ABC News' Katherine Faulders contributed to this report.*

 Comments (72)



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