

May 22, 2003

Hon. Jim Ramstad  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Norm Coleman  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Mark Dayton  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

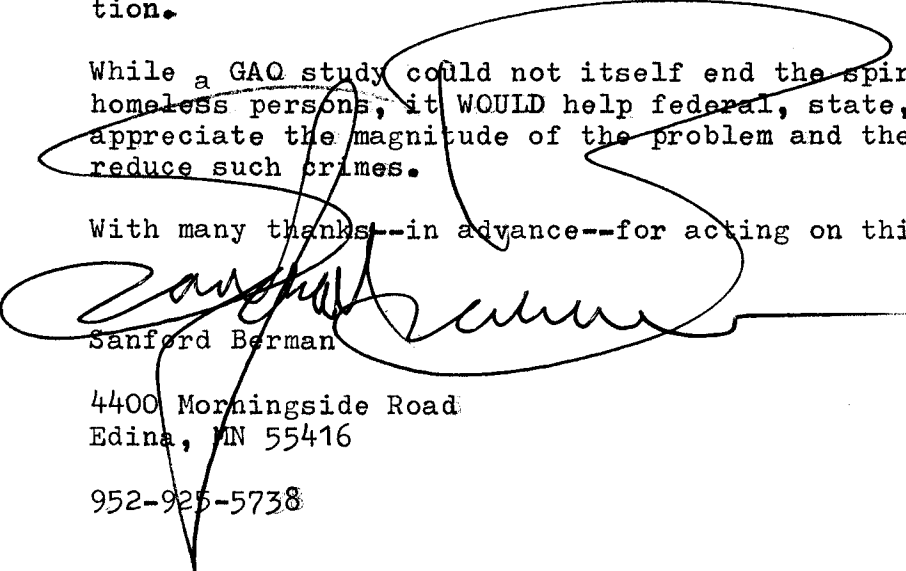
Dear Representative and Senators,

Within the past week a homeless woman was found beaten to death in the Twin Cities. Unhappily, her fate was not an isolated, unusual case. The National Coalition for the Homeless lately released a study covering the years 1999-2002 that documents the severe and growing incidence of violence and hate crimes against homeless people. Available at <http://www.nationalhomeless.org>, the report documents 123 deaths and 89 physical attacks occurring in 98 cities, 34 states, and Puerto Rico. The youngest victim: four months old. The oldest: 76.

I urge you to request a GAO investigation into the full nature and scope of violence and hate crimes against people experiencing homelessness. Such GAO research would enormously assist Congress and the public in getting accurate, authoritative information on the beatings, murders, arson, harassment, and property damage undergone by homeless men, women, and children, who are especially vulnerable because of being easy, visible targets who often lack a place to retreat for safety and protection.

While a GAO study could not itself end the spiralling hate crimes against homeless persons, it WOULD help federal, state, and local officials appreciate the magnitude of the problem and then act to prevent and reduce such crimes.

With many thanks--in advance--for acting on this crucial issue,



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