

Florida's Legislature Passes Bill Banning Speech in Schools that Is Critical of Israeli Government

written by GEG | May 2, 2019



A bill in Florida, waiting for the signature of Governor Ron DeSantis, requires public schools, including universities and colleges, to treat anti-Semitism as discrimination, and anti-Semitic speech and acts as racist. The bill conflates criticism of the Israeli government with anti-Semitism. It identifies anti-Semitism, and only anti-Semitism, as an example of discrimination, ignoring all others. -GEG -GEG

The Senate Monday may have given Gov. Ron DeSantis the perfect agenda-sweetener for his Florida Cabinet meeting next month in Jerusalem – a signing ceremony for a new Florida law requiring public schools to treat anti-Semitism as discrimination, and anti-Semitic speech and acts as racist speech and acts.

The Florida Senate unanimously approved House Bill 741 with all 39 members on the chamber floor Monday signing on as co-sponsors.

HB 741 – approved by the House 114-0 on April 11 – was substituted for its Senate companion bill, Senate Bill 1272, which had only progressed through one committee, on the Senate floor and adopted after senators consented to waive procedural rules to accelerate its passage.

After it is formally enrolled, the bill goes to DeSantis for the governor's signature. He has 10 days to sign or veto any bill once it crosses his desk; approved bills left unsigned and un-vetoed still go into effect 10 days after transmittal.

In other words, DeSantis could

ceremoniously sign it during his May 25-31 trip to Israel which will include a Florida Cabinet meeting at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, likely sometime between May 28-30.

The Senate moved to introduce HB 741 Monday morning two days after a shooting at a San Diego-area synagogue and six months after the deadly mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

GOP State Chairman Sen. Joe Gruters, R-Sarasota, who sponsored SB 1272, cited both attacks in describing why the measure is necessary to ensure students are properly educated.

“Anti-Semitism is on the rise, and we have the ability to do something about it. No one is born with hate in their heart,” Gruters said.

The fact that the Poway synagogue gunman is 19-years-old – recently emerged from 13 years of public school education – shows “our education system has failed,” he said.

“If we don’t do something now,” Gruters continued, “it will only get worse. I believe when the history books are written, it will be known that on this day, in this chamber, and at this moment, we made a statement against hatred.”

HB 741, sponsored by Rep. Randy Fine, R-Palm Bay, amends the Florida Educational Equality Act to add religion to the list of categories for which discrimination is prohibited, and adopts a 2017 definition of anti-Semitism encoded by the Miami-Dade County city of Bal Harbour and endorsed by the U.S. State Department.

Fine filed HB 741 in February as a response to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement which he says is orchestrating anti-Israel campaigns using anti-Semitic tactics.

Under the bill, the BDS movement is defined as a terrorist group no different than the KKK or ISIS, which has prompted some to question if criticism of the Jewish state could be mischaracterized as being anti-Semitic criticism of the Jewish people.

HB 741 also amends Florida’s hate crime statute to specifically include anti-Semitism, which it defines “as a perception of the Jewish people, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jewish people,” through such acts as:

- “Calling for, aiding, or justifying violence against Jews.
- “Alleging myths about a world Jewish conspiracy or that Jews control the media, economy, government, or other institutions.
- “Accusing Jewish people as a whole of being responsible for real or imaginary wrongdoing by a single Jewish person, group, or the state of Israel, or for acts of non-Jews.
- “Accusing the Jewish people of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- “Accusing Jewish citizens of countries other than Israel of being more loyal to Israel than their own nations.
- “Demonizing, applying a double standard to, or delegitimizing Israel.”

Senate

Minority Leader Audrey Gibson, D-Jacksonville, was the only lawmaker to cast a negative ballot against the measure during its committee rounds, objecting to potential freedom of speech challenges – which it is likely to draw – in SB 1272’s one and only committee hearing.

For

that, Gibson was vociferously skewered by Republicans and Democrats and, within two days, had issued change-of-heart statements.

[Read full article here..](#)

Additional source:

First test of Florida’s commitment to campus free speech looms