



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 20, 2021

## Florida Governor Signs Anti-riot Bill into Law

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis (R) signed into law on Monday an “anti-riot” bill passed by Florida’s Senate last week just in time for the riots that will likely follow the Derek Chauvin trial verdict, regardless of the outcome.

The 61-page [bill](#), titled “Combatting Violence, Disorder and Looting and Law Enforcement Protection Act” (H.B. 1), addresses a wide variety of riot-related activities that Democrats have attempted to define as “peaceful protests” over the last few years, including the destruction of historic property and memorial sites. It defines a “riot” as a “violent public disturbance” involving three or more people with the intent to damage property or cause harm to others.



AP Images

The bill creates a new second-degree felony called an “aggravated riot,” which involves more than 25 participants and leads to great bodily harm or more than \$5,000 in property damage, involves threats to use a deadly weapon, or blocks roadways. Under the legislation, Florida citizens can sue their local government if it fails to stop a riot and municipalities are financially responsible for any damages incurred by their failure to stop a riot from taking place. The bill also makes it much more difficult for municipalities to defund police in an overzealous effort to appease the Left.

The bill also creates the crime of “mob intimidation,” which is defined as three or more people “acting with common intent” to force or intimidate another person into taking a viewpoint against his will, and is punishable as a first-degree misdemeanor. The provision harkens back to [viral videos](#) of BLM protesters in Washington, D.C., intimidating diners at restaurants to raise their arms in solidarity with the BLM.

“If you look at the breadth of this particular piece of legislation, it is the strongest anti-rioting, pro-law enforcement piece of legislation in the country,” DeSantis said at a press conference. “There’s just nothing even close.”

The bill passed the Florida House on March 26 by a vote of 76-39. It passed in the Senate last week by a vote of 23-17.

According to the *Orlando Sentinel*, the parts opposed by Democrats include giving civil legal immunity to people who drive through protesters blocking a road, a six-month mandatory sentence for battery on a police officer, and preventing people who have been arrested for rioting or offenses committed during a riot from being bailed out of jail until after their first court appearance.

State Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills), sponsor of the Senate version of the measure, fielded questions from Democrats last week before the vote.



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State Senator Janet Cruz (D-Tampa) asked Burgess if the bill would protect someone such as James Fields, the Charlottesville protester who killed Heather Heyer in 2017 by driving a car into protesters. Burgess clarified that the measure only applies to people defending themselves from protesters, not those who deliberately target them.

“That person rammed a vehicle into those people to hurt them ... he wasn’t defending himself,” Burgess said. “That is in no way protected in this bill.”

The bill, Burgess asserts, is “about preventing violence.”

Republicans in the Florida Senate blocked 16 amendments from Democrats that would have watered down the bill before last week’s vote, the *Sentinel* reports.

Daily Wire reports that Black Voters Matter co-founder and executive director Cliff Albright said the law is meant to criminalize the activity of America’s youth in response to George Floyd’s death.

“That’s not what Democracy looks like,” he asserted.

But the reality is that the behaviors described in the bill are already defined as crimes in most states. The Florida legislation merely underscores that the criminal activity is not going to be granted immunity simply because they occur during what the Left has deemed acts of civil disobedience.

“Not only did we do that to put the public on notice as to what constitutes a riot, but also to make it clear to both protester and law enforcement where that line in the law is drawn,” said Burgess.

According to the *Sentinel*, the bill is in direct response to requests by Governor DeSantis following the violent protests that occurred throughout most of 2020.

And as noted by DeSantis, the bill does not prohibit Florida citizens from exercising their rights to protest.

DeSantis [stated](#), “This legislation strikes the appropriate balance of safeguarding every Floridian’s constitutional right to peacefully assemble while ensuring that those who hide behind peaceful protest to cause violence in our communities will be punished. Further, this legislation ensures that no community in the state engages in defunding of their police.”

Now signed, the law takes effect immediately.



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