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Florida Governor Proposes Bill to Let Citizens Shoot Looters and Rioters

If leftists were calling him “Death Santis” before over COVID-19, he’s doubly earned the nickname now.

Florida governor Ron DeSantis (R) has prepared an “anti-mob” legislation that would expand the state’s Stand Your Ground law to allow citizens to shoot at looters.

The legislation says it is an attempt to prevent “violent and disorderly assemblies” by permitting violence against anyone involved in the “interruption or impairment” of a business, which the proposal describes as being

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a burglary within 500 feet of “violent or disorderly assembly.”

Florida’s Stand Your Ground law, passed in 2005, removed the burden of having to retreat first before using force to counter a threat and gave judges more leeway to grant “immunity” to someone they believed acted in self-defense before letting a case get to the jury.

This comes as the year 2020 has been rocked by riots and looting throughout America since the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor.

DeSantis, a vocal supporter of President Trump, reportedly submitted copies of the legislation to the state’s Senate Committee on Criminal Justice and the House Judiciary Committee, according to the [Miami Herald](#).

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The outlet notes that “Other key elements of DeSantis’ proposal would enhance criminal penalties for people involved in ‘violent or disorderly assemblies,’ make it a third-degree felony to block traffic during a protest, offer immunity to drivers who claim to have unintentionally killed or injured protesters who block traffic, and withhold state funds from local governments that cut law enforcement budgets.”

The section of the proposal targeting counties and municipalities that make “disproportionate funding reductions” to law-enforcement agency budgets is likely DeSantis’ way of fighting back against the “defund the police” movement. Under the governor’s proposal, each municipality would need to certify to the state by October 15 that it is not disproportionately cutting law-enforcement agencies’ funding.

And the [Tampa Bay Times](#) reported on the reception the draft legislation is getting from key Republican leaders in the GOP-controlled state legislature:

Incoming Senate President Wilton Simpson is “interested in taking a look at the issue,” but there is no update on what the Senate plans to do with the draft language the governor’s office emailed in September, according to Senate spokeswoman Katie Betta.

Sarasota Republican state Sen. Joe Gruters, who doubles as the chairman of the Republican Party of Florida, told the Times/Herald on Monday that the governor “has the right idea” with the proposal. He did not say whether he will sponsor the bill, only that he “will definitely be supporting it however I can.”

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri, who serves as the legislative chair of the Florida Sheriffs Association, said the issue is an important one to sheriffs across the state but was hesitant to comment on draft legislation.

“The sheriffs want to review it and look forward to the proposed bill that comes out of drafting, and we will carefully analyze and consider it, and take a position once we see the final form,” Gualtieri said Tuesday.

As expected, the proposal has elicited criticism from liberals in the state.

“It dangerously gives armed private citizens power to kill as they subjectively determine what constitutes ‘criminal mischief’ that interferes with a business,” former Miami-Dade prosecutor Aubrey Webb told the *Herald*. “Someone graffiti-ing ‘Black Lives Matter’ on a wall? Urinating behind a dumpster? Blocking an entrance?”

“Any number of things could occur. ‘Interruption or impairment’ to what degree? You could have people who are peacefully assembling who go in and out of a store — and a store owner or even a passerby could get nervous and misinterpret something and think they have the right to use unnecessary physical force — or even deadly force,” said Reid Rubin, a retired Miami-Dade homicide prosecutor.

Melba Pearson, a civil-rights attorney and former deputy director of Florida’s American Civil Liberties Union, told

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the *Times* the bill is “designed to tamp down on First Amendment rights of protesters.” She called the term “anti-mob” misleading, asserting that Florida did not have large-scale clashes between police and protesters like other states.

“These are not mobs running around the street. People are using their First Amendment rights. This is a democracy, lest some in Tallahassee forget,” said Pearson, a former Miami-Dade prosecutor.

First, Pearson is wrong in saying this is a democracy. The United States and the State of Florida are republics.

Second, while it is true that Florida has escaped the kind of anarchy seen in Portland, there certainly are Antifa cells and other armed left-wing elements in the state (the John Brown Gun Club, the Coalition of Armed Labor, etc.), and the only reason they haven’t risen to CHOP-level mob violence is *because* Republican leaders such as DeSantis repeatedly show that such antics will not be tolerated in the Sunshine State.