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Republican Lawmaker Wants Protests Labeled “Economic Terrorism”

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A Washington state senator is drafting a bill which would define anti-Trump protestors as “terrorists” for “obstructing economic activity.”

On Wednesday, Washington State Senator Doug Ericksen announced that he will introduce a bill in the state legislature which will allow for felony prosecution of protesters who “intentionally break the law...by obstructing economic activity.”

“I respect the right to protest, but when it endangers people's lives and property, it goes too far,” said Erikson. “Fear, intimidation and vandalism are not a legitimate form of political expression. Those who employ it must be called to account,” the statement continued.

Erikson, who was Donald Trump’s campaign director in the state, said that he was already working on the proposal before the wave of protests against the president-elect, but that it would apply to those as well. Protests against the election of Trump have continued across the country for eight consecutive days and have been particularly strong in Seattle, the state’s capital.

Erikson, who is considered a strong ally of the fossil-fuel industry and whose district includes two oil refineries, said he was also aiming the bill at environmentalists, Indigenous activists and their allies who have obstructed oil and coal trains, pipelines and similar projects. In Olympia, Washington, activists continue to blockade a rail line which supplies fracking materials to the North Dakota Bakken oil fields in solidarity with the Water Protectors in Standing Rock.

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Erikson said that the bill would criminalize not only protesters but anyone who helps fund, organize or encourage protests. “We are not just going after the people who commit these acts of terrorism,” Erikson said. “We are going after the people who fund them. Wealthy donors would not feel safe in disrupting middle-class jobs.”

Erikson’s bill comes at the same time that right-wing activists in Seattle have launched a petition for the recall of Kshama Sawant, a city councilmember and member of the group Socialist Alternative for her support of the anti-Trump protests.

While the bill is unlikely to pass in the Democrat-controlled legislature, Doug Honig, spokesman for the ACLU’s state chapter, called the proposal “the kind of excessive rhetoric that this country has seen enough of recently.”

Erikson’s bill is similar to a proposal in Iowa, where Republican Bobby Kaufmann is introducing what he calls the “suck it up, buttercup” bill which would criminalize protesters attempting to block traffic as well as defund colleges and universities offering post-election trauma support to students.

Erikson did not say if his bill would have applied to the 1773 Boston Tea Party riots which saw a group of protestors board three British tea ships moored in Boston Harbor and dump 342 chests of tea into the water, ushering in the American Revolution.

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