

FREEDOM DEMANDS ACTION!

Protect Your Freedoms

Background: In 2017, over 20 state legislatures proposed some forms of new restrictions on peaceful assembly and free speech. The bills have been largely introduced by GOP legislators in response to protests that took place around the country at the outset of the Trump Administration the proposed Dakota Access pipeline.

ALEC has adopted this as a model bill and had it introduced in Ohio in 2018.

Core Talking points:

- Everyone has the right to free speech and peaceful assembly, whether they are Republicans, Democrats or Independents.
- This bill is an unnecessary distraction that restricts our freedoms.
- Hardworking people in Ohio want elected officials to focus on creating jobs – not playing politics or silencing free speech.
- Ohio already have laws on the books for trespass and property damage, and these laws are duplicative and unnecessary.
- This effort is government overreach - legislators shouldn't decide whether or not people can speak out for themselves.
- This bill would create a new set of crimes or significantly enhanced penalties and costly fines that could apply broadly to anyone – whether they are supporters of the President, members of the Tea Party, or just concerned parents who are speaking out at a school board meeting. Existing laws are already in place to prosecute riots, property damage, refusal to obey lawful order from police, etc.
- It will lead to unnecessary lawsuits that cost taxpayers money to defend something that clearly violates the First Amendment of the Constitution.
- This effort is an embarrassing distraction that will put our state in the national spotlight for criminalizing free speech.
- Citizens participating in free speech and peaceful assembly are the sign of a healthy democracy. It is undemocratic for elected officials to pass laws that silence their own constituents. We should be encouraging greater participation in our democracy, not less.
- This bill is not about public safety, and would actually place a burden on police and other public servants, which makes our communities less safe.
- Citizens peacefully exercising their Constitutional Rights should not be held accountable for the actions of others simply because they are present in the same location.
- The right to disagree with government policies, to assemble in groups, and to redress grievances has its roots in the founding of our nation and is supported in text and tone of The Constitution, The Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence.
- The American Middle Class was built in no small part by workers who took action to disrupt the production and services of private enterprise through strikes and other means in order to achieve the 40 hour week,

child labor laws, worker safety, collective bargaining, and living wage rates. Working people have always had to demonstrate their power and their discontent toward the policies of a powerful financial and political elite. Trying to intimidate people from participating in the search for justice in their lives is un-American.

- SB 33 would criminalize the ministry of justice-focused churches and faith-based justice organizations who engage in or support peaceful public protest at/near critical infrastructure sites.
- If a faith-based justice group or a church is found complicit when one of its members is found guilty of a felony “intending to tamper” or “improperly tampering” with “critical” infrastructure, the church may face a \$100,000 fine. This would destroy most churches and most faith-based organizations.
- A church may not assist a member in paying a fine in a civil action. This blocks a congregation from its religious duty to care for its members in times of distress and need.