

U.S. lawmakers introduce bill to prohibit contracts with entities that boycott Israel



Washington, July 26 (RHC)-- Twelve Republican U.S. senators have introduced a bill which would ban federal contracts with entities that boycott Israel.

The lead sponsor of the bill, dubbed the Countering Hate Against Israel by Federal Contractors (Chai) Act, Senator Jim Risch, claimed in a press release that “businesses who boycott Israel only seek to normalize anti-Semitism.”

The same bill was introduced in the House of Representatives in July last year, but it’s still in the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability, pending a vote.

Last February, the House passed an anti-boycott act which prohibits American nationals from taking part in boycotts organized by any “international governmental organization” against U.S. allies.

The IGO Anti-Boycott Act raised concerns among followers of the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which existed for 15 years and aims to pressure Israel to comply with international law.

The Chai Act is a federal-level application of numerous anti-BDS laws that have been passed at state levels. Some 28 U.S. states currently outlaw agencies from working with firms that boycott Israel, while six others passed similar bills in the form of executive orders, according to Newsweek.

The American Civil Liberties Union has said anti-BDS laws violate the First Amendment right to boycott.

The Columbia Journal of Transnational Law has also published an article examining arguments justifying anti-BDS laws and found that "many of the anti-BDS laws likely run afoul of the First Amendment by imposing unconstitutional conditions on government contractors and/or beneficiaries of public funding."

While many lawmakers have justified anti-BDS laws as fighting discrimination, an article published in The Harvard Law Review found that "anti-BDS laws are not backed by a valid antidiscrimination interest."

The latest development comes as Israel has become increasingly isolated since the October war on Gaza.

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