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CT officials announce federal agent accountability bill



Federal ICE agents force entry into a citizen's home. Connecticut legislators recently showed support for a bill that will prohibit acts by federal agents deemed unjust.. PHOTO COURTESY OF @PERIODICOCUBANO ON PINTREST

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Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumental and Attorney General William Tong are backing legislation that would ensure the ability to sue or prosecute federal agents under Connecticut law.

Senate Bill 397 says that anyone, including federal agents and supervisors and state officers, who commit an offense "shall be liable to the party injured in an action at law or other proper proceeding for redress." There is a partner bill, HB 5448, in the house.

Tong and Blumenthal held a press conference on March 23, to explain why they were supporting the bill. Tong said in the press conference that Connecticut would enforce its laws as a sovereign state.

"As Connecticut's chief legal officer, I want it to be clear to everybody in this state, in this building, across Connecticut, that it is the policy and the law of the state of Connecticut to respect, honor and protect immigrants and immigrant families. Period," Tong said.

Tong said that the bill is an "unremarkable proposition" because it is reemphasizing the way law and order should already work.

"If you are a federal agent or state official, you don't have the right, without justification, to hurt somebody or kill somebody, and Connecticut law will be enforced against you if you do," he said.

State Sen. Martin Looney, the senate president pro tempore, said the bill was in the "spirit of the 10th amendment to the U.S. Constitution," which hands all powers not explicitly given to the federal government to states.

"We all know that many Republicans and some others treat the Bill of Rights as if it were only one amendment, the 2nd amendment, and just about ignore anything else in it," he said.

Looney said it was important to hold federal officials to the same standard as state officials when it came to use of force.

"Why should they be treated any differently than the rigorous standards we apply to our own law enforcement?" he said. "That's critically important to hold people accountable and to give our citizens confidence that those with badges are not going to be just enabled to be lawless."

Looney also said this was relevant in a time where "our consciences are shocked almost every week by something new that happens with ICE agents, who we know are often not trained to the level that local and state law enforcement are trained."

State Sen. Bob Duffy, the senate majority leader, said we should not live in a world where citizens are scared of their government.

"This is the United States of America, and it is a place where our government should be here to help us and support us, not be a place where we're worried about masked goons coming in and shooting us for peaceful protest, for carrying out our constitutional rights, for expressing ourselves as we have for hundreds of years as Americans," Duffy said.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal said reform was necessary, practical and just to address "violations of people's civil rights without redress."

"Now, I want to be very clear-eyed here: this message today will, I think, reverberate in United States Congress among my colleagues to say states are moving ahead," he said. "But at the same time, we know this law is going to be challenged."

He said that although he thinks it will hold up against a challenge, we need a federal law to reinforce the protection it provides.

He gave examples of people who suffered violence and unfair detention at the hands of federal agents, saying bills like these, and hopefully a federal bill in the same vein, could provide redress.

"It is absolutely necessary, and again, I'm proud to stand here and thankful for the leadership we see here today," he said.

Revolution Wind switched on

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A wind farm managed by the Dutch energy company Ørsted provides power to Rhode Island and Connecticut. The Revolution Wind project will power 350,000 homes with a capacity of 704 megawatts.. PHOTO BY JENNA OUTCALT, NEWS EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

The Revolution Wind project, a privately-owned wind farm that began construction in 2023 about 15 miles off the coast of Point Judith, Rhode Island, began making its first contribution to the Connecticut electric grid on March 13, according to Governor Lamont's March 14 press release.

The project, which cost about $5 billion and consists of 65 wind turbines, is still only about 90% complete, according to WTNH.

Once complete, Revolution Wind will be able to power 350,000 homes and businesses, with a capacity of 704 megawatts, 304 of which will go towards Connecticut's grids, according to the Revolution Wind website. This will make up about 5% of CT's electricity demand, according to the press release.

Revolution Wind is owned by partners Danish energy company Ørsted and Global Infrastructure Partners' Skyborn Renewables, and is scheduled to be completed by the end of the year, according to CT Mirror.

Revolution Wind's completion has been delayed, as it was one of five wind projects that was stalled by the Trump administration last year when they paused wind farm leases due to "unspecified national security risks identified by the Pentagon," according to WTNH.

The first stop-work order came in August and was overturned by U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth; the second was in December and was again overturned by Lamberth in January, according to CT Mirror.

Other projects on the East Coast that have been paused included the Vineyard Wind project in Massachusetts, Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind,, and Sunrise Wind and Empire Wind in New York, according to WTNH.

Gov. Ned Lamont championed the affordability offered by this project, saying it will be crucial for "lowering utility costs for families and businesses" in his press release.

Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Commissioner Katie Dykes said that it will save "hundreds of millions of dollars a year," according to the press release.

An analysis conducted by DEEP determined that up to $500 million a year would be saved in energy costs after full deployment and implementation of the project. According to his March 13 press release, State Rep. Joe Courtney said, "the cost of this new locally generated power at nine cents per kWh is far less than the average of 30 cents per kWh in our region."

According to the press release, Lamont said that the wind project will help in "diversifying [Connecticut's] energy supply."

Commissioner Dykes is quoted in the press release saying that this will help to keep the Connecticut power grid "insulated from geopolitical events" in the midst of the oil price fluctuations due to the U.S.-Iran War

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