

Texas state representative calls ICE on pro-immigrant protesters

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Texas State Representative Matt Rinaldi, a Republican, called Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers on pro-immigrant protesters in the House gallery on Monday afternoon.

Protesters had gathered at the state capitol to oppose Senate Bill 4, which was signed into law earlier this month by Republican Governor Greg Abbott. The reactionary bill, which up until this month had been unsuccessfully pushed in each legislative session since 2011, bans sanctuary cities, allows police to question anyone they detain about their immigration status, and compels local officials to comply with federal requests to detain individuals in state and local law enforcement facilities.

Hundreds of people had gathered to express their opposition to the anti-immigrant measures, but photos online show a full Texas House gallery, with at least several dozen protesters filling multiple floors. Some media outlets are reporting that chanting by demonstrators briefly drowned out the proceedings.

Rinaldi defended his actions in a statement posted on Twitter shortly after the events, writing, “I called ICE on several illegal immigrants who held signs in the gallery that said, ‘I am an illegal immigrant and here to stay.’” The rest of Rinaldi’s tweet outlines threats that were allegedly made against him from Democratic lawmakers.

Video captured by KVUE shows lawmakers pushing each other in a scuffle on the state House floor, presumably after Rinaldi boasted of his inflammatory actions to members of the House’s Mexican-American Legislative Caucus.

Democratic State Representative Philip Cortez reported the events to news outlets saying, “We were just on the floor talking about the SB4 protests, and Matt Rinaldi came up to us and made it a point to say,

‘I called [ICE] on all of them, And this is completely unacceptable. We will not be intimidated. We will not be disrespected.’”

The incident underscores the deep-felt hostility to the draconian immigration policies being pursued by the Trump administration among the working class.

While the Democrats have centered their opposition to Trump on unsubstantiated allegations of Russian hacking and demands for “tougher stance” against Putin, there is broad support in the working class for the defense of their immigrant class brothers and sisters, the defense of democratic rights and freedom of speech, and a defense of science and progress.

At the other pole, the fact that a lawmaker could see it fit to personally call ICE officials to intimidate, disperse, and possibly deport protesters reflects the degree to which the Trump administration has emboldened right-wing anti-democratic elements.



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