



103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

SB2355

Introduced 2/10/2023, by Sen. Rachel Ventura

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act

Creates the Truth and Tolerance Commission Act. Establishes the Truth and Tolerance Commission within the Department of Human Rights to delegitimize hate speech. Directs the Governor to appoint 15 voting members to the Commission who represent diverse racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and geographic groups. Establishes the Office of Truth and Tolerance within the Department of Human Rights to help lead and support the work of the Commission. Describes the Commission's duties. Requires the Department to provide staff and administrative support for the Commission. Provides that members of the Commission shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for reasonable travel expenses incurred in performing their duties.

LRB103 28581 DTM 54962 b

1 AN ACT concerning government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the Truth
5 and Tolerance Commission Act.

6 Section 5. Findings and purpose.

7 The General Assembly finds that:

8 (1) Our county is suffering from a wave of hate directed at
9 various demographic groups, including Blacks, Latinos, LGBTQ
10 individuals, and members of the Asian, Jewish, and Muslim
11 communities. This hate is driven by baseless conspiracy
12 theories and specific lies that are largely spread on the
13 Internet.

14 (2) Hate speech has led to hate crimes, including violence
15 in Black churches, synagogues, mosques, LGBTQ-friendly
16 nightclubs, homes, businesses, and on the streets.

17 (3) Hate speech undermines our democratic systems. When
18 people believe outlandish conspiracy theories, they become
19 susceptible to doubting the systems governing elections and
20 the administration of justice, and they are more likely to
21 support the authoritarian use of government power to punish
22 those who have been wrongly or outrageously accused. It has
23 happened before. The QAnon conspiracy theory, for example, is

1 largely a rebranding of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"
2 that empowered Hitler.

3 (4) While social media platforms should certainly enforce
4 rules against dangerous lies, it will never be practical to
5 block all hate speech. As antidefamation authorities explain
6 in the book entitled "Viral Hate: Containing Its Spread on the
7 Internet": "The best antidote to hate speech is
8 counter-speech--exposing hate speech for its deceitful and
9 false content, setting the record straight, and promoting the
10 values of respect and diversity."

11 (5) However, counter-speech is effective only if it is
12 backed by a broad coalition of community leaders. The names of
13 individuals and organizations give counter-messages
14 credibility. Setting the record straight requires a broadly
15 endorsed and concerted effort.

16 (6) This Act is intended to prevent hate crimes and defend
17 our democratic institutions.

18 Section 10. Definitions. In this Act:

19 "Demographic groups targeted for hate" means people who
20 are targeted based on their race, religion, ethnicity, gender,
21 sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

22 "Department" means the Department of Human Rights.

23 "Hate speech" means lies directed against demographic
24 groups targeted for hate.

1 Section 15. Truth and Tolerance Commission.

2 (a) The Truth and Tolerance Commission is established
3 within the Department to delegitimize hate speech. The
4 Governor shall appoint 15 voting members to the Commission who
5 represent diverse racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, and
6 geographic groups.

7 (b) The Office of Truth and Tolerance is established
8 within the Department to help lead and support the work of the
9 Truth and Tolerance Commission.

10 (c) The Commission shall:

11 (1) meet monthly, or more often as needed, to receive
12 information, to direct research, and to create responses
13 to dangerous conspiracy theories and lies against
14 demographic groups targeted for hate;

15 (2) conduct public hearings and town hall meetings
16 that allow experts, organizations, and individuals to
17 provide information and make proposals that respond to
18 hate speech;

19 (3) use the Internet to accept input and simplify the
20 reporting of instances of hate speech;

21 (4) create and promote resources to counter hate
22 speech and promote tolerance, including, but not limited
23 to, truthful counterarguments and memes for use on social
24 media using text, audio, video, or slideshow presentations
25 designed for any particular audience, including, but not
26 limited to, government agencies;

1 (5) create an advisory committee of Illinois residents
2 who may:

3 (A) help to identify stories, theories, and lies
4 against demographic groups targeted for hate;

5 (B) provide information to help debunk lies; and

6 (C) promote information that debunks hate speech
7 and encourages tolerance; and

8 (6) make recommendations, whenever appropriate, to the
9 General Assembly about the most appropriate and effective
10 measures the State could put into effect to combat hate
11 speech.

12 (d) The Department shall provide staff and administrative
13 support for the Commission. Members of the Commission shall
14 serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for
15 reasonable travel expenses incurred in performing their
16 duties.