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COMPANIES THAT WORK WITH ICE COULD LOSE CALIFORNIA CONTRACTS

Microsoft, Thomson Reuters, and Palantir are among those who could lose city and county contracts if new legislation passes.

MASSOUD HAYOUN · FEB 27, 2019

A [California](#) lawmaker has launched a bid to block the state from contracting with companies that funnel intelligence to [federal immigration agents](#), in a move that would bolster [the state's protections](#) for undocumented residents targeted by the Trump administration.

On Friday, Assemblyman Rob Bonta introduced the "Sanctuary State Contracting and Investment Act" (AB 1332), a bill that would bar California cities and counties from contracting with companies that provide Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol with data on, or "extreme vetting" of, residents, or assist those agencies in immigrant detention. The bill also bars cities and states from "investment in stocks, bonds, securities, or other obligations" with those companies.

"The state has a moral obligation to protect its residents from persecution," according to the bill's [text](#). "Immigrants are valuable and essential members of the state."

The bill continues on the efforts of prior legislation, like the [sanctuary state](#) law, the California Values Act, signed by then-Governor Jerry Brown in 2017. The sanctuary state law prohibits state agencies and employees from providing support to federal immigration agents involved in the Trump administration's push to deport immigrants, but does not prohibit them from giving companies that might do so contracts.

Among the many companies cited in the text for their work supplying ICE with information were Thomson Reuters, Palantir Technologies, and Microsoft. A spokesman for Thomson Reuters declined to comment, and the others did not respond to requests for comment.

The bill now sits in the California Assembly, where it must pass several legislative hurdles before it goes to a vote there, and then in the state Senate. If it passes both houses, the bill will go to California Governor Gavin Newsom to sign.

The offices of Newsom and Attorney General Xavier Becerra did not immediately respond to a request for comment on AB 1332.

The bill "basically says we're going to put our purchasing power where our values are," Bonta says. He adds that the bill text will be amended to apply not just to city and county governments but also state agencies, prohibiting all levels of California government from doing business with companies that help in the Trump administration's mass deportations.

"This is a common sense bill," Bonta says. "Consumers all the time make their purchasing decisions based on their values. They choose to do business at stores they support and not at stores that do things they object to."

Among the reasons that Bonta cites for this legislative push is President Donald Trump's repeated denigration of American immigrants and communities of color.

Bonta anticipates that the bill will face the same pushback, mostly along party lines, that the sanctuary state law did. "I think it'll be controversial, just like the sanctuary state law was. But that passed," he says. "If folks are ready to support a sanctuary state, this is a good fit for them."

Beyond the immediate goal of barring the state from indirectly doing business with ICE and CBP, Bonta believes that his bill is part of a movement to hold state and local governments accountable for how they do business. Bonta cites the push in the city of Berkeley to bar companies that work with ICE from receiving public contracts as another contemporaneous bill like his.

"The first [sanctuary city] was a lot harder than the 400th one. People needed to learn about how they were better for communities and for safety and law enforcement," Bonta says.

California immigrant rights advocates commended Bonta's efforts. "We applaud Assemblymember Bonta for introducing this landmark legislation," says Maricela Gutiérrez, executive director of Services, Immigrant Rights & Education Network, an advocacy group active in the California Bay Area and Central Valley. "Such databases have been a back-door channel making it easier for ICE and CBP to continue to ramp up their deportation of community members."

Gutiérrez says that the legislation takes California's sanctuary state law to the next level, bolstering protections for immigrants. "Despite the fact that many Bay Area cities and counties have restricted local law enforcement's entanglement with ICE, many of these companies based in the Silicon Valley with local government contracts are, unfortunately, making ICE and CBP's jobs easier to tear apart immigrant families," she says. "This legislation is a huge step in making sure that the state and local jurisdictions are doing all they can to not be complicit in the Department of Homeland Security's practices."