

# [***Indiana lawmakers pass bill defining antisemitism, with compromises***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BH6-74H1-DYMD-62B2-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** ISABELLA VOLMERT, Associated Press

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**Body**

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana lawmakers came to a compromise Friday to pass a bill defining antisemitism in state education code.

The bill — meant to address [*antisemitism on college campuses*](https://apnews.com/article/indiana-antisemitism-definition-bill-590e459d0cc7f68318f11b3d5a2a7c69) — stalled this month amid persistent disagreement between lawmakers in the legislative session’s final days. The final version accepted by both the House and Senate chambers made concessions in language that was opposed by critics of Israel.

Indiana House Republicans passed [*House Bill 1002*](https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2024/bills/house/1002/details) two months ago after listing it among their five priorities [*for the 2024 session*](https://apnews.com/article/indiana-2024-legislative-session-4ed0c485e17f4bf5aace3e2d51d133e8). The legislation would broadly define antisemitism as religious discrimination, claiming it would “provide educational opportunities free of religious discrimination.”

This is the second time the House has tried to pass the legislation, but an identical bill died last year after failing to reach a committee hearing in the state Senate. The legislation rose to new importance this session in light of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war.

The House bill used the [*International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*](https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism) (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, and explicitly included “contemporary examples of antisemitism” provided by the alliance, which make references to Israel. These have been adopted by the [*U.S. Department of State*](https://www.state.gov/defining-antisemitism/).

State senators, however, passed an amended version of the bill Tuesday that removed language opposed by critics of Israel’s military campaign in Gaza. The amended version still included the IHRA’s broad definition of antisemitism but deleted the alliance’s name and examples that include explicit references to Israel.

Opponents argued that such direct references would stifle criticism of Israel in academic settings and advocacy on campuses for Palestinians in a [*worsening humanitarian crisis*](https://apnews.com/article/gaza-malnutrition-famine-children-dying-israel-palestinians-2f938b1a82d7822c7da67cc162da1a37). Support of the bill virtually flipped once the changes were made.

Some Jewish organizations called on lawmakers to reverse course and include the entirety of the original House bill.

The disagreement between the chambers prompted the bill to go to conference committee. Republican state Rep. Chris Jeter, the House bill’s author, said in committee Thursday he would prefer for lawmakers to add the IHRA name back to the bill, but keep the clause about its examples out.

The conference committee, a body consisting of lawmakers from both chambers, reached an agreement Friday to add the IHRA name back to the bill. The clause about its examples remained cut from the final version.

The bill was approved by both chambers of the General Assembly Friday evening with bipartisan support. It now goes to Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb for final review.

Caryl Auslander, spokesperson for the Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council, told reporters the group is behind the final version of the bill. She said the examples are incorporated into the meaning of the bill through the IHRA name even if they are not explicitly cited in the bill's language.

“We are grateful to the House and Senate in Indiana for listening to our community and for protecting Jewish Hoosier students across the state,” Auslander said. “We urge Governor Holcomb to sign this critical piece of legislation into law as soon as possible.”

The bill’s sponsor, Republican state Sen. Aaron Freeman called it a “strong statement” against antisemitism.

“Hopefully it’s a guide to live by in the future in our state,” he said.

The Indiana Muslim Advocacy Network, which testified against the original House version over concerns it would stifle criticism of Israel on college campuses, released a statement in support of the final bill.

“We are thankful to members of the Indiana General Assembly who spent time listening and working with multiple communities to make sure the contemporary examples accompanied by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism, were stricken from the bill,” the statement said.

Daniel Segal, a coordinating committee member for Jewish Voice for Peace Indiana, said the final version of the bill is an improvement of the original House bill, but not as clear as the Senate version.

In the legislative session’s final week, prominent conservative figures in Indiana ***politics*** made statements in support of reinstating the IHRA reference, including Attorney General Todd Rokita, Lieutenant Governor and gubernatorial Republican candidate Suzanne Crouch and several U.S. representatives for the state, including GOP U.S. Senate candidate Jim Banks.

The [*push to define antisemitism*](https://apnews.com/article/antisemitism-definition-states-law-zionism-indiana-georgia-871571f3b392455b1479827bdf1f5ea7) in numerous states predates the [*Oct. 7 attacks*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-01-21-2024-02caafa092668ecc7ff122229c166807) in which Hamas killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, [*sparking a war*](https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-war-news-02-29-2024-f9b5a62a80d8b83eac4946d3c85af58b) that has killed more than 30,000 Palestinians. But the war gave supporters another motivation. This year, governors in Arkansas and Georgia signed measures and a proposal is still awaiting gubernatorial review in Florida. South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Wednesday signed a bill defining antisemitism.

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