

Tennessee House OKs bill to limit police oversight - Associated Press State Wire: Tennessee (TN) - March 14, 2019

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Tennessee House passed a bill Thursday to limit community oversight boards that investigate police misconduct, setting up a showdown with the Senate over whether those local panels should keep the ability to subpoena people to testify or turn over evidence.

The House's 66-26 vote comes in the infancy of an oversight board Nashville voted to create in November. The referendum was spurred by a fatal shooting of a fleeing armed black man by a white Nashville officer in July. The officer faces first-degree murder charges.

The version the House passed would strip away subpoena power from the panels, while the Senate could vote next week on a tweaked bill that still lets boards issue subpoenas, but only if a board-hired special investigator, the police chief or head of police internal affairs gets a judge's approval.

GOP Senate Speaker Randy McNally and Republican Rep. Michael Curcio of Dickson, the bill's sponsor, both said the bill is likely headed to a conference committee, where House and Senate lawmakers to sort out the difference. Curcio argued that the Senate version broadens subpoena power.

During Thursday's floor discussion, some of Nashville Democratic state lawmakers argued that the legislature wants to nullify the will of the city's voters. The GOP-majority chamber voted down an amendment to exempt Nashville from the requirements.

"Overturning elections just because you don't like the results is not what this body is here to do," said Rep. Bo Mitchell, a Nashville Democrat.

Curcio said the bill was setting up necessary guardrails for the oversight panels, including prohibiting them from limiting membership based on demographics and ensuring that all documents provided to them will be confidential.

Some Republicans also used the debate to argue that they are showing they have the backs of law enforcement officials by limiting the boards.

"We stand with our law enforcement officers. We trust them to do their job," House Majority Leader William Lamberth told reporters Thursday. "There are lots of procedures in place right now ... to hold officers accountable if they step over the line."

Republican Gov. Bill Lee has already said he supports stripping subpoena power from the panels.

A Senate committee, meanwhile, opted last week to include limited subpoena power in their bill at the request of the city of Knoxville, which has an oversight board, but has not used subpoena power in about two decades of existence.

The bill is ready for a Senate floor vote.

Memphis also has a police oversight panel, but that group lacks subpoena power.

Nashville's new oversight board has subpoena power and requires that four of the seven members should live in "economically distressed communities."

The Fraternal Order of Police opposed the measure and unsuccessfully attempted to block the vote in the buildup of the election.

The local police union has also been running a digital campaign to sway public opinion in favor of Andrew Delke, the Nashville officer charged in 25-year-old **Daniel Hambrick**'s fatal shooting in July.

This week, the Nashville Fraternal Order of Police released a web video that shows a man shooting a melon at close range, saying it's the type of handgun Hambrick was holding while Delke chased him.

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