

Utah legislative committee approves harsh rioting penalties

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<https://www.thetelegraph.com/file/599/2/5992-80942026.pdf>

<https://apnews.com/article/police-utah-police-brutality-provo-riots-d4ac70a69d5b11f1c57803dd6a33fa4c>

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A Utah legislative committee has passed a bill that would increase penalties and eliminate bail for rioting in response to last year's protests against police brutality and racial injustice. Republican state Sen. David Hinkins presented the bill to the Senate Judiciary, Law Enforcement, and Criminal Justice Committee with members of the neighborhood watch group United Citizens Alarm, KUER-FM reported Thursday.

"The citizens of Utah overwhelmingly support harsh penalties for riotous, violent and unlawful behavior," said Casey Robertson, who formed the citizen group after a motorist was shot by protesters in Provo last year. "If this bill passes, violent criminals will think twice before destroying our towns and threatening and harassing Utah citizens."

The legislation, sponsored by Republican Rep. Ryan D. Wilcox, would also give immunity to someone driving a car who hits or kills a protester if the driver fears for their life. That language was removed from a different bill after public complaints.

Marina Lowe, policy council for the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah, compared the language to what happened during the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, when a neo-Nazi drove into protesters, injuring 35 people and killing a woman.

Republican state Sen. Todd Weiler said there were some problems with the bill but he would still vote for it.

"It's my belief that 98, maybe even 99% of the people that participated in the protests in Salt Lake were not rioters, had no intent to riot and many of them kind of got smeared by the actions of relatively few," Weiler said.