

# Austin American-Statesman

## **LT. GOV. DAN PATRICK SAYS UPCOMING BILL WOULD DEFEND TEXAS ENERGY SECTOR FROM BOYCOTTS**

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Contending that the Texas energy sector is being unfairly targeted by environmentalists, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said Thursday that legislation will be unveiled next week to prohibit the state from doing business with any investment firms that boycott oil and gas companies.

"I think it will pass easily," Patrick said, calling the planned bill one of his legislative priorities while speaking during a public policy forum sponsored by the [Texas Business Leadership Council](#).

Energy companies have been big backers of Patrick and other Republican politicians in Texas, and Patrick's remarks Thursday marked the second time this week that he has thrown red meat to his conservative supporters.

A day earlier, he announced what he called "the Star Spangled Banner Protection Act" as another priority for the current legislative session. The bill's aim is to ensure "that the national anthem is played at all events which receive public funding," according to his office.

He said the energy-related legislation that will be released next week will be modeled after a 2017 bill – signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott – that prohibits state agencies from contracting with companies that support a boycott of Israel, as well as certain state investment funds from investing in them.

Energy companies "are being treated a little bit like the state of Israel," Patrick said Thursday. "That is what is happening in the oil and gas industry."

The state's ban on doing business with companies that support a boycott of Israel is being challenged in court as unconstitutional.

Patrick only mentioned state investment funds during his comments Thursday regarding the new legislation, so it's unclear if the bill would be similar to the Israel legislation in also preventing state agencies from doing non-investment-related business with companies that have said they're steering clear of the fossil fuel-based energy sector.

Adrian Shelley, of the watchdog group Public Citizen, said the bill will have to be analyzed once it's released to determine its full impact. But he called the broad objective "overly protectionist and counter to conservative principles of the free market," as well as shortsighted.

Patrick is "trying to put the thumb on the scales for the

oil and gas industry by pledging retaliatory strikes," Shelley said.

He said the state would be better served by efforts to modernize the Texas economy, instead of "clinging to a soon-to-be outdated form of energy."

During his remarks Thursday, Patrick said that "any Wall Street firm that says, 'we are turning our back on the oil and gas industry in Texas and we will not loan them money (and) we will not invest' – Texas is not going to give them any of our money to hold or invest."

"That will be the (last) day that we send you any money," Patrick said.

He said the state "has billions of dollars that flow through all these various investment companies and brokerage houses, etc., etc. – bonds and all those things."

A new lawsuit was filed in federal court in December challenging the state's ban on contracting with businesses that support a boycott of Israel as unconstitutional.

Earlier last year, a federal appeals court tossed out a similar lawsuit, arguing that the legal challenge was moot because the state Legislature amended the law to only apply to businesses and not individuals.