

One Wisconsin Institute: State Senate Committee to consider ‘riot’ legislation

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MADISON, Wis. — The State Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety is scheduled to consider a series of bills, Senate Bills 303, 304 and 305, that could chill free speech in Wisconsin and threaten peaceful protesters with criminal charges for exercising First Amendment rights today.

The legislation as introduced would create broad new definitions of what constitutes a “riot” and threaten peaceful protesters with criminal penalties if they are present at a gathering that is vaguely determined to present a threat of damage to property or to cause personal injury.

The following are the statements of One Wisconsin Institute Program Director Analiese Eicher:

“These vaguely written bills with ill defined terms have a clear purpose, intimidate people and suppress speech that calls out injustice and inequity in our state and our society..

“From changing voting laws to try silence voices of dissent at the ballot box to creating safe spaces on college campuses for right wing hate speech we have seen a concerted effort by politicians in Madison to use their power, and our tax dollars,

to promote those with whom they agree and silence those with whom they do not.

“Whether the authors of this legislation like it or not, the First Amendment and the Constitution of the United States continues to protect our rights to speech, to assembly and to free association.”