

Will the City Council officially make New Bedford a sanctuary city?

Three New Bedford city councilors are pushing to add undocumented workers (or “illegals” as they have called them) to a protected class when it comes to discrimination. This seems to be the beginning steps of making New Bedford an official sanctuary city and risking a confrontation with a President-elect Trump who has promised to cut off federal funding to sanctuary cities.

When it comes to legislation and motions every word matters. On Tuesday, November 22, 2016, Councillors Coelho, Oliveira and Rebeiro are scheduled to put forward this motion:

“WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Coelho, Oliveira and Rebeiro, requesting, that our State Legislative Delegation join us and other communities across the Country and not deport masses of illegals in order to insure harmony and safety in our community and to not discriminate against a group of people.”

In their words, they want our State legislators to call it discrimination to deport someone living in New Bedford illegally. This doesn't seem to be sitting well with many people. Most people on our **Facebook discussion thread** seem to oppose this and on our **Twitter poll nearly 70% oppose it.**

Why would something so unpopular be pushed officially in the New Bedford City Council chambers?

The most obvious reason is that Donald Trump was elected President and this is a clear knee jerk political reaction against his potential immigration policy. Across the country Hillary Clinton supporters are holding anti-Trump protests,

hosting high school and college walk outs and politicians are pushing to protect residents in America “illegally” by creating sanctuary cities.

A sanctuary city is a designation given to cities that adopt a policy of protecting undocumented immigrants by not prosecuting them for violating federal immigration laws. Some 32 American cities have pushed for this designation to include Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Minneapolis and Seattle.

New Bedford has always quietly been an unofficial sanctuary city. Walk into any seafood processing plant on the New Bedford waterfront and you’ll see evidence of this claim. Scallops are being processed by some of the hardest working men and women in America, here legally and illegally.

But now three New Bedford City Councilors seem to be pushing towards an official designation by going on record. That wouldn’t mean much under President Obama, but could hurt New Bedford under a Trump administration. New Bedford relies on state and federal grants for our schools, historic park, fire department personnel and a lot of construction projects. **President-elect Trump has already stated that he would block federal funding for sanctuary cities.**

I’m not pushing a message for or against New Bedford being a sanctuary city. We have been an unofficial sanctuary city for decades and I know our fishing industry relies on hard working undocumented workers. But why get Trump’s attention? Why not continue to fly under the radar? Why play political chicken with a President Trump?

Regardless if you are for or against calling for “illegals” to be protected against deportation, your voice can be heard at the New Bedford City Council chambers on Tuesday, November 22nd, or you can call or email your City Council members **here**.