

Anti-Shariah bill defeated in Oklahoma senate

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c. 2012 Religion News Service (RNS) The Oklahoma state Senate voted down a bill that would have prohibited state judges from considering foreign laws, including religious laws, in their decisions.

State Rep. Sally Kern (R-Oklahoma City) submitted House Bill 1552 last year after a similar law approved by voters in a 2010 referendum was ruled unconstitutional.

Oklahoma's House of Representatives approved the new bill by a vote of 76-3 in 2011, but it wasn't heard in a Senate committee until this year. The Senate Rules Committee rejected the bill Thursday (April 5) in a 9-6 vote.

The bill was widely considered to have targeted Shariah, or Islamic law, as have other bills in several other state legislatures.

"Our state has come a long way when you consider that people overwhelmingly supported a similar bill in 2010, and now such a bill can't even make it onto the floor of the Senate," said Muneer Awad, director of the Oklahoma chapter of the Council of American-Islamic Relations.

Oklahoma is one of several states where anti-foreign law bills have died or been withdrawn recently, including Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Minnesota, and New Jersey. The movement to ban Shariah from state courts started in Oklahoma two years ago.

David Yurushalmi, a lawyer for the conservative Center for Security Policy that drafted the legislation on which the anti-Shariah bills are based, was not discouraged. "There is a strong grassroots movement that supports this legislation and that will keep putting these bills forward," said Yurushalmi.