

Massachusetts State Senate passes police reform bill 30-7

The Massachusetts Senate passed a bill overnight that would impose a new level of oversight on police.

The bill which passed 30-7 included the creation of a new independent Police Officer Standards and Accreditation Committee that would have the power to revoke or renew the licenses of law enforcement officers as well as certify them in the first place – something that would have to happen every three years. In addition, this committee would investigate any wrong-doings by police and make a decision on whether to revoke an officer's certification. Furthermore, the bill would limit any use of tear-gas and completely ban the use of choke-holds.

The bill would dramatically limit the legal protection of police have with "qualified immunity" by allowing civil lawsuits against those officers who violate any law. The state's largest police union stated that he felt this would make it so that police officers would be second-guessing themselves on the job – something that could lead to dire consequences amid life or death situations.

Objecting to how fast the bill was passed and without a public hearing were law enforcement groups and the Massachusetts Coalition of Police. These groups wanted the bill postponed until there was a public hearing allowing the residents of the Commonwealth to voice their opinions.

One law enforcement group representing minority law enforcement officers stated that they were not made a part of creating the bill and that their opinions were not considered.