

CTA Name: Sign on as a Co-Sponsor to the Ending Qualified Immunity Act of 2021

Date Created: 4/18/21

Related Legislation: Ending Qualified Immunity Act of 2021, S. 492

Description of the Issue:

Excerpts from an article in The Intercept:
(<https://theintercept.com/2021/03/01/qualified-immunity-ayanna-pressley-ed-markey/>)

“Rep. Ayanna Pressley and Sens. Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren, Democrats of Massachusetts, are introducing a [bill](#) to fully end *qualified immunity*, a legal doctrine that protects police and law enforcement officials from civil liability in cases where they are accused of violating someone’s constitutional rights.

Pressley first introduced a bipartisan version of the bill last summer, as an amendment to the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, a package of sweeping police reforms developed in response to nationwide [protests against police brutality](#). Pressley and Amash’s amendment did not make it into the version of the JPA that was passed by the House in June.

The bill comes as Congress prepares to vote a second time on the Justice in Policing Act, which includes a provision that would limit but not end qualified immunity.

The prospect of narrowing qualified immunity has historically had broad bipartisan support, from the libertarian Cato Institute, to NFL quarterback Tom Brady, to the American Civil Liberties Union, and even Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, with some disagreement on particulars. As The Intercept previously [reported](#),

however, some Democrats have backed away from efforts to reform qualified immunity for fear of angering law enforcement groups and Republicans, as well as facing attack ads in the next round of midterm elections. During a call with House Democrats just after [last year's elections](#), New Jersey Rep. Bill Pascrell said he didn't want to be made to "walk the plank" on qualified immunity.

Asked about pushback to the JPA provision, Markey said there was no room to make half-hearted efforts to reform qualified immunity. "The lives that are lost to excessive force and police brutality are not half lives, so there can be no half measures to ending qualified immunity," Markey said. "Full accountability means abolishing qualified immunity once and for all. We owe it to the families of those who have been murdered to provide them this full measure of justice."

Who to call/contact: Senators Klobuchar and Smith. Urge them to sign on as a co-sponsor to the bill.

Sample Script:

Dear Senator...

I am calling about Senate Bill 492, the Ending Qualified Immunity Act of 2021. I am a member of Indivisible St. Paul and a constituent. I live at (insert address). In the last few years America has woken up to the grim reality of the long history of violence inflicted by police on black and brown bodies across the nation. [add in something here in your own words about why police violence against black and brown people must stop, why are you outraged? How do you feel about the murder of George Floyd? Philando? Daunte? Adam? Breonna? Sandra? Countless others... Why are you taking action today?] One concrete thing we can do to change police behavior is to make sure the police are subject to civil lawsuits when they violate the law while on the job. To that end, I ask that you sign on as co-sponsor to Senate Bill 492, the Ending Qualified Immunity Act. We must eliminate qualified immunity as a defense to civil cases against police officers.

Police officers must be held to account for their actions the same way we hold doctors, lawyers, accountants and other professionals accountable for the harm they inflict in the course of their work. Thank you.