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Why now? A New Ask!

Q: Why are we calling with these specific asks (did they cosponsor, did they sign on to a “Dear Colleague” letter, etc) **right now?**

- **A:** While a bill makes its way thru the Legislative Process, there are not a lot of opportunities for a Legislator to actively show that he/she is fighting for a bill.
- We want legislators to not just state support (cosponsoring, general statements of “will vote yes “IF it comes to a vote”) -- we want them to FIGHT for passage!
- And, we need external benchmarks by which to measure that.
 - * We have a new benchmark--and need you to make this new ask: signing onto the Dear Colleague letter.

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“Dear Colleague” Letter & Inside Baseball

Q: What is a “Dear Colleague” letter? Isn’t it a little “inside baseball”? Can’t we just tell them we want their support?

- **A:** As noted above, there are not a lot of opportunities for a Legislator to actively show that he/she is fighting for a bill until the day it is on the floor for a vote.
- There's a LOT of politicking that happens before that--but it's usually only behind closed doors.
- This letter, drafted by the lead sponsors, urges action from the Committee, so the bill can move toward a vote. The letter is a public declaration of support.
- **It tells the players inside the building that the members are committed, and so Leadership should ask.**
- And as importantly **it tells constituents--you--how strongly your legislators stand, letting us know where we need to keep pushing and calling and *organizing*, even more.**
 - * So yes, it's inside baseball. But it is also more.

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Co-Sponsoring

Q: Isn't "COSPONSORING" an indication of support?

- **A:** Absolutely. However, it's possible for a legislator to cosponsor -- while also working to fight against a bill's passage!!
(See our list of SCA Cosponsors: progressivemass.com/safecommunities)
- **Sounds crazy, but here's how or why it happens:** Legislators, seeking to please as many of their constituents as possible, will sometimes cosponsor a bill merely to satisfy advocates who are often most vocal at the beginning of the session
 - * This gets them credit for doing the right thing, and will satisfy (quiet) the advocates for a while at least.
 - ! It's an easy, low bar--it's a bar, but it's not hard to reach.
 - * However, that legislator might also fear OPPONENTS to the bill even more (see "[Calling Again?](#)" below).
 - * So, having gotten credit with Advocates for cosponsoring (easy!), a legislator who is not truly committed can undo that ostensible support, behind closed doors.

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Legislators fear SCA opposition? In MA?

Q: Say more about Legislators fearing opponents.

- On "controversial" bills, **Legislators sometimes fear taking a vote**--worried it will stir up conservative anger and that it will affect their chances at re-election.
- **They would rather not have to take the vote at all.**
- To avoid confronting conservative backlash, **such a legislator might ask the Speaker of the House to "not take up a bill"** so that legislators don't actually have to vote on a bill.
- And because it's private politicking "inside the building", voters, constituents, might never know the legislator is trying to have it "both ways."
- **A legislator who is not *outwardly* fighting *might* well be undermining the bill behind closed doors**--we just don't know, but we know it happens.

- * Therefore, **measurable, knowable, public actions demonstrating support**--such as **the “Dear Colleague” letter** (7/2017)--are all the more important for voters to gauge commitment.
 - * And that’s why we need to push them to sign on.
- Besides--cosponsorship is just a start, and we must continue to ask Legislators to verify their commitment AND ramp up their support until it is done.

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Supermajority Democratic Legislature

Q: Legislature has a veto-proof Democratic majority. Right?

- **A:** Yes. If the Democratic caucus wanted, the SCA could be passed and override any veto threat from Republican Charlie Baker, who has declared he does not support the Safe Communities Act.
- Democrats COULD distinguish their agenda from both Governor Baker, whom they would like to beat in 2018, and President Trump.
- * Will they?

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Calling AGAIN?

Q: Do I keep calling, really? I've been calling...My rep/sen has told us they're doing everything they can...

- **A:** Yes please. Legislators are very busy, and sometimes taking action to support a bill can really drag out.
- And in that time/space, our **opponents are making lots of noise--and they are well-funded and with established media reach.**
- Your, our, repeated calling will keep the pressure on the legislator to actually complete a promised action (such as signing on to a “Dear Colleague” letter).
- * Such an action advances the cause “within the building,” indicates publicly degree of support.
 - * It allows activists to have a concrete “ask” around which to engage and advocate.
 - * It also gives us an opportunity to applaud legislators who are moving outside of their safety zone, and reward them for their growth in political courage.
- Unfortunately, studies have shown that **legislators overly emphasize negative reactions** they get--which means that we have to work that much harder to counteract with more supportive contacts.
- * Continuing a program of sustained outreach and calling, we are reminding legislators that there is still strong support for the bill, even when he or she is receiving negative contacts about the bill.
- **When there is a new request**, it provides another opportunity (perhaps less awkward for the caller) to check in again. So pull out your phones and program your speed dial!

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Legislator Is Already Opposed (“Really??”)

Q: My Rep/Sen is already quite clear that s/he is opposed. Should I really call anyway...?

- **A:** Yes! The only way s/he will change her/his mind is if they find out that enough constituents are unhappy with their position.
- In addition, you as constituent have the right to know or understand the reasons why the legislator is opposed to the bill (which better helps all of us persuade her/him).
- While you’re not going to get a “Yes!” from Rep/Sen on this call, you’re working on the longer game:
 - * Your call shows there are people in the district who are unhappy with their position
 - * You are not going away
 - * You will continue to organize OTHER people to reach out
- We will continue to educate the voters -- and we need voters to keep reminding legislators: *“This is important. You’re on the wrong side, and we are paying attention.”*

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My Legislator has stopped listening to me (“Are you SURE?”)

Q: My legislator has made it clear that s/he knows my position and that my calls are pointless. I get the point of continued reminders, but this feels counterproductive. Are you SURE I should keep calling?

- **A:** If your Legislator has tuned **you**, specifically, out -- it’s time to mix it up! This happens, unfortunately.
- So, your job now has changed: find someone else in your community to make the inquiry.
 - * It will illustrate that, no, it’s not just one or two people, who care.
 - * This is good strategy generally (even if one’s Legislator hasn’t tuned you out). Organizing your friends and neighbors this way has a huge impact!
- The more calls we can get in the same time frame, the more powerful the message will be--legislators talk to each other.
- So don’t let your legislator go uncalled, just because they’ve tuned you out (boo on them, though). Organize--and contact us if you need help!

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Legislator hasn’t seen the Dear Colleague Letter

Q: I called and my legislator said s/he didn’t know about it. What next?

- **A:** Please refer the Aide to contact **Peter Missouri** (peter.missouri@masenate.gov) in State **Senator Jamie Eldridge’s** office.
 - * As the Senate sponsor, Sen. Eldridge is one of the authors of the letter.

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My Local Group

Q: We have been working on SCA or/and “Sanctuary”/“TRUST” ordinances in our community. We want to plug into larger campaign but also do our own thing. Is that OK?

- **A:** Short answer, yes! The SCA effort is very much about empowered and decentralized grassroots efforts -- and also coordinating on big picture goals. It's both and and. We'll be convening more opportunities for grassroots teams to check in with the campaign as a whole -- first opportunity is July 18 conference call (progressivemass.com/2017_07sca).
- Plug in by signing up here: progressivemass.com/sca-outreach#organizer

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Staying Informed

Q: How do I make sure I am plugged in/up to date on coalition efforts etc.

- **A:** While the SCA Campaign is by design decentralized and encourages grassroots leaders to organize their own communities the way they know best -- we do want to all row in the same direction and that community groups are empowered with the most relevant latest information.
 - * Sign up here, whether you are a group or an individual, and we will keep you apprised of upcoming campaign conference calls, etc:
progressivemass.com/sca-outreach#organizer

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I have questions!

Q: Where should I direct them?

- **A: Questions about this action** (calls into State House about the Dear Colleague letter+)--send questions to your community/grassroots point of contact, or safecommunities@progressivemass.com
- **Broader questions** about Safe Communities policy, campaign plans, etc. -- input them here (helps us identify common questions we should address more generally too!):
 - * progressivemass.com/sca-outreach#questions

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Preparing for this call

Q: What can I do to prepare for the call? Or can I just dial and go, using the script prompts on the online form?

- **A:** If you want to do a little extra prep, here are a few resources:
 - * **To familiarize yourself** with the “asks” and script prompts, you can review it here: progressivemass.com/sca-call-script-2017_07
 - * Important info to know in advance:
 - ! **Your Legislators' contact info** (look it up here, then add it to your contacts! progma.us/whosmylegislator-ma
 - * Useful info to know in advance:

! Whether your Legislators are [Co-Sponsoring the SCA](#):
progressivemass.com/safecommunities

→ However, it is acceptable to go ahead and start the call script [via the form](#)
(progma.us/2017_07scacall)

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READY TO CALL ?

USE THE ONLINE FORM TO RECORD YOUR CALL AND GO THRU THE SCRIPT!

PROGMA.US/2017_07scacall

DON'T FORGET TO ASK YOUR NETWORK TO DO THE SAME

And, If you are actively organizing in your community--or want to start-- [join our
our Organizers' Call for SCA on July 18](#), with an **update** from **MIRA** and State
Sen. Eldridge (lead sponsor in Sen).

ORGANIZERS' CALL: progressivemass.com/2017_07sca--please share! .

PROGRESSIVE MASS  GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS CALL
ORGANIZING FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES
JULY 18, 2017 - TUESDAY - 7PM
REGISTER FOR CALL:
progressivemass.com/2017_07sca
WITH SEN JAMIE ELDRIDGE
GRASSROOTS TEAMS FROM ALL ORGS, OR
WORKING ON YOUR OWN, ARE WELCOME!

(Can't make it but want to be plugged in? Register here:

progressivemass.com/sca-outreach#organizer -- you'll receive alerts for the next
organizing call

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