

THREE STRIKES COMMUNITY FORUM—UPDATE

Policy coalition building was the measure of success that we used to judge the Dec. 21st three strike forum in Roxbury. Professor Charles J. Ogletree of the Houston Institute on Race and Justice at Harvard University opened the forum and Max D. Stern, the President of the Mass. Defense Lawyers closed the event. In between these two distinguished orators we heard from our elected officials, Reps. Rushing, Fox, Holmes and State Senators Diaz and Jehlen. Community agencies were well represented as well both on the panel and in the audience. After listening to discussions on the legal, social and moral ramifications of S2080 and H3818 we were left with several options. Many members of the audience signed up for information/advocacy with Strive, Span, CEPS, FAMM, the Center for Church and Prison, Blackstonian and other non-profits in attendance. The event built coalitions and informed the community.

As a result of the meeting our state representatives called a follow up meeting at the state house chaired by our new Minority Whip, Representative Byron Rushing. In attendance was Reps. Fox, Holmes, Henriquez and via call-in Charles J. Ogletree and Reverend Rivers.

The Omnibus bill is in committee with three senators and three representative's will meet sometime after the beginning of the year. The options are few. If the committee does not reach a compromise bill, the leadership of the legislature would have to kill the bill and we would then start the process over (our choice). If there is a bill that comes out of committee, the new version would go to both branches for a up or down vote (no amendments allowed). If the vote is up, the bill would go to the governor for signing. I believe there will be a bill out of the committee and our most reasonable chance to kill this current version is to ask the governor to veto the bill.

1/3 rd. plus 1

To sustain a gubernatorial veto we would need 1/3 plus 1 of the membership of the House or Senate to vote the bill down. In the House we would need 54 plus 1 or 55 votes. We received 12 dissenting votes in the House thus we need a minimum of 43 new votes in the House to sustain a veto.

To sustain a veto in the Senate we would need 21 votes. We received no votes in the original voting.

We have agreed that the first step will be a special invitation only meeting of state-wide advocates in the criminal justice ,community advocacy and social service field. The Rev. Rivers is seeking names/organizations from other advocates for suggested attendees to this meeting. The meeting will be held at the Ella J. Baker House on Jan. 4th from 9-11 am. We are especially seeking advocates from Springfield, Worcester, Lowell, Lawrence, Brockton, the Cape and Islands, and the North Shore. The goal of the meeting is to first identify those legislators in the 20 majority/minority districts in the commonwealth whose districts will be impacted most by the passage of this legislation. Second, we must inform the entire legislature about the financial, social and moral impact this legislation will have if passed. Third, we must move in both a strategic and timely fashion. With proper momentum, we could, with the support of the Majority Whip and other members of the House, request a meeting with the legislative leadership of the House, Senate and the Governor.

Please contact the Ella J. Baker House, Rev. Eugene F. Rivers at 617-282-6704 with your suggested recommendations of advocates for the Jan.4th. meeting.

Please consider a donation to the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition to support the repeal of S2080 and H3818. Please help.