

Senate Republicans hold up Massachusetts police bill for third day

Michael P. Norton and Chris Van Buskirk
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For the third time in as many days, Senate Republicans prevented debate on a wide-ranging police reform bill, but it appears the Senate could launch into its debate on Monday. Sen. Ryan Fattman (R-Sutton) used a procedural motion to postpone debate – asking that all of the nearly 130 amendments to the bill (S 2800) be printed in the Senate calendar.

Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester) said there is bipartisan agreement on 80-90 percent of the bill, but a section dealing with qualified immunity of law enforcement officers is dividing the Senate. He said a bill that's less expansive and focuses on areas of agreement is more likely to yield "timely action."

Qualified immunity is a doctrine that prohibits civil rights suits against government officials where unconstitutional conduct had not been clearly established as illegal at the time it occurred.

"Our language is fine. It is solid," Sen. William Brownsberger (D-Belmont) said on the floor. "It's just complicated enough that people get confused about it."

While he said senators would use the rest of the weekend to continue talking through the qualified immunity issue, Brownsberger added, "Delay is the enemy of success here." Participating in the session by phone, Sen. Jo Comerford (D-Northampton) said senators need to act in response to widespread anger over police brutality. "We must not delay the

work on this bill anymore," she said. House leaders have not unveiled their plan.

The Senate will revisit its bill Monday at 11 a.m.