

## **LETTER: Sheriff Hodgson is wrong about Massachusetts law**

Joe Quigley

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We, in the majority, do not take people’s rights away, we recognize and celebrate them.

It was obvious from events in other places that people’s equality was often left up to the personal, religious, and political beliefs of individuals or groups, so in 1843, Massachusetts added to the General laws Part 1: Title XV: Section 102 which states, “All persons within the commonwealth, regardless of sex, race, color, creed or national origin, shall have, except as is otherwise provided or permitted by law, the same rights enjoyed by white male citizens, to make and enforce contracts, to inherit, purchase, to lease, sell, hold and convey real and personal property, to sue, be parties, give evidence, and to the full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of persons and property and shall be subject to like punishment, pains, penalties, taxes, licenses, and exactions of every kind, and to no other.”

There are no qualifiers in the law. It merely states, “All persons within the commonwealth”.

This equality law must be removed by legislative action, not merely left to die from indifference, if it is to be removed from the books. But there are some who seek to ignore the law, as well as people’s rights.

Employing his standard tactic of saying scary things and offering no corroborative evidence, Sheriff Thomas Hodgson opposes the most recent ballot measure that would make and keep Massachusetts a sanctuary state.

According to Sheriff Hodgson's convoluted thinking, allowing Massachusetts to remain the sanctuary state it has been since 1843 would make streets less safe for everyone. He peddles the notion that an undocumented person who commits a crime would be immune from arrest.

This is an outrageous lie.

Sanctuary and safe states and communities limit their cooperation with federal immigration enforcement agents in order to protect low-priority immigrants from deportation, while at the same time turning over those who have committed serious crimes.

Hodgson claims undocumented people do not face arrest, but they, like the rest of us, if caught in the commission of a crime, are arrested, a background check is run, and follow-up steps are taken accordingly. And like "All persons within the commonwealth," police cannot detain anyone who hasn't at least been suspected of a crime, and even if a police officer does arrest someone suspected of committing a crime, if that person is cleared, they must let that person go, and if a charge sticks, after bail is posted, or jail time completed for whatever the arrest was made, that person should be let go as well.

Sheriff Hodgson claims Bristol County is not safe because of undocumented people. But, on a scale of 1-100, the American Community Survey rates Bristol County at 16.2 for violent crimes, 6.5 points below the national average of 22.7, while on property crime, its rating is 23.4, or 9.3 below the national rating.

According to a website funded through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the Office of Justice Programs, and the U.S. Department of Justice, crime has gone down.

The Cato Institute has found that native-born residents were much more likely to be convicted of a crime than immigrants in the country legally or illegally, and this applies to homicide and property crimes.

The journal Criminology found that places with higher percentages of undocumented immigrants do not have higher rates of crime, but, rather, states with larger shares of undocumented immigrants tended to have lower crime rates than states with smaller shares. Its study found that not only do undocumented immigrants not increase crime, their presence may actually contribute to the drop in overall crime rates.

The sheriff wants the people of Massachusetts to ignore our history when it comes to how we treat people. He's hoping to be the one who gets us to remove the rights of people so he can put a notch on his tough guy bed post.

We in Massachusetts have shown, and recently, that that is not who we are. We deal in facts, and we recognize, not remove, people's rights.