

MISGUIDED POLICE REFORM EFFORTS

ABOLISH
THE
POLICE

WORLD ESTIMATE
HOT
WAKES
SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

Chief Joel F. Shults, Ed.D

The National Police Association's free Law Enforcement education series is designed for home school, classroom, or independent learning. As part of our nonprofit educational mission, it prepares you for careers in public safety. This series is authored by [Chief Joel F. Shults, Ed.D.](#)

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The Transition from Ignorance to Stupidity

I know we aren't supposed to call names or label, but sometimes the shoe just fits too well to ignore. The protests of the use of lethal force against 25-year-old Jayland Walker in Akron, Ohio have tipped from reasonable concern developed after the event for lack of facts to outrageous and malicious violence victimizing innocent residents and business owners.

Within less than 60 seconds after Akron police attempted to stop Walker for traffic and vehicle equipment violations, gunfire came from Walker's vehicle. What appears to be a muzzle flash was captured on a traffic camera, and the sound of a gunshot is heard on an officer's body-worn camera. With an armed and fleeing suspect, police engaged in a pursuit of the car. After several minutes, Walker slowed the vehicle, and he got out and ran. Officers pursued him on foot and attempted the use of a Taser to stop him. Walker suddenly turned toward the officers and they believed he made a move consistent with drawing a weapon. Several officers fired.

Let's look at the critic's arguments. Many will say that police should not be stopping vehicles for minor traffic violations. We can agree that examining traffic stop patterns for racial bias and ticketing to raise municipal revenue are reasonable accountability audits. But to say that broken taillights, speeding, not using turn signals, and expired license plates, etc should be left alone is to ignore some very real consequences of non-enforcement. The same violators that we curse for causing our

near-collisions are the ones we hope were seen by the police, but who the critics think should be left alone.

One of those consequences is more traffic deaths and injuries. While violent crime seizes headlines, the carnage and cost of traffic crashes are also increasing. Navigating in traffic is a complex effort despite our comfort level with it. We rely on obedience to traffic laws and vehicle equipment and licensing regulations to ensure the generally safe travel of ourselves, our loved ones, and our commodities. Those of us who have driven in third-world countries in the absence of these commonly accepted rules of the road can testify to the degradation of safety suffered where laws may not exist or may go unenforced.

Another consequence of fewer traffic contacts is that drunk drivers and armed offenders like Walker can travel about endangering the public with little fear of consequences.

As always, the critics wonder why the situation wasn't de-escalated. This is one area where ignorance often meets stupidity. Drivers are required by law to stop and comply with the police, not speed away and fire gunshots. Citizens are required to comply with lawful arrests rather than run. They cannot expect officers to open their arms for a hug when an offender runs toward them and makes threatening gestures. Those who flee and see that a Taser has been deployed should reasonably understand that the officers are giving them a chance to submit without being faced with deadly force. The timeline of Walker's actions and the officers' responses are measured out in seconds with no

discernable room for anything other than what the officers did to protect the public from Walker's behavior. To the question of why didn't the officers de-escalate, the response is that they did.

Another critique in this case is what appears to be an excessive number of shots fired by police. We can understand the questions that civilians have about why there are so many wounds. First, if deadly force is legally and ethically appropriate, as appears in this case, then the means and extent of its delivery is a moot point. We are conditioned to the fair fights of TV and movies and naturally recoil at what reality reveals. Walker's autopsy results may or may not reveal which of the wounds inflicted were from bullet entry, bullet exits, or bullet fragments. The initial reports of 60 wounds don't mean that 60 shots were fired.

Police officers must make their own, independent decisions to fire their weapons or not. When multiple officers are present, as would be expected in this case after a pursuit and reports of shots fired, each makes their own determination based on their point of view and observations. Critics will say that after one officer fires, the others join in as a result of a contagion effect. Indeed, the fact that one officer saw a deadly threat and fired is one of many considerations that other officers at the scene may use, but they know that they will have to justify every trigger pull from their own judgment.

Finally, police officers are often trained to fire more than once after determining there is a deadly threat. Once again, the entertainment industry has injected toxic distortions about the reality of the effects of

bullets on the human body. The reality that many offenders are using body armor gives rise to purposeful multiple shots beyond the center mass (shooting to the center of the torso) exercises that officers practice on the target range. Advancing aggressors have shown a remarkable ability to continue their attacks when wounded. Therefore, it is not unreasonable for an officer to fire two to five rounds at a threat to end it.

Finally, the argument that Walker was unarmed when shot is a distraction from reality. Officers, who are trained humans but humans still, had knowledge that he had been armed, that he was actively resisting efforts to apprehend him to end his dangerous behavior, and turned to charge what he knew was a phalanx of armed police while displaying behavior inconsistent with merely running but, rather, behavior consistent with drawing a weapon.

The outraged want the eight officers fired and jailed, the police department reviewed, training changed, and probably have Chief Stephen Mylett tarred and feathered. The sole person responsible has already been held accountable for the whole affair: Jayland Walker. Weep for him if you will, but burning buildings and hating the police over his death is without excuse.

Understaffed Police Agencies Means Danger for Citizens

Rising rates of violent crime have been blamed on all of the politically acceptable reasons except the truth: law enforcement has not been allowed to do its job.

The question of what causes crime has never been fully answered. The easy, but often inaccurate conclusion, is that when Event B happens after Event A, then Event A caused Event B. The errors that can happen with this assumption are twofold. One is that Event A may simply be the most obvious, loudest, or most visible but other factors are not seen or known. The second is that there may be intervening causes that happen between Events A and B, shifting the course of history.

Any social research will be called into question because all of the factors are out of the researcher's control. In physical sciences, researchers control all elements and introduce only one variable. The outcome of the experiment can then be contributed to only one thing. Anyone who repeats the experiment the same way will get the same result. Not so in social research. Therefore, commentators are free to toss around theories that may not be provable.

Theory 1 is that COVID restrictions have caused stress that resulted in outbursts of violence. It's natural to blame COVID for just about any ill that has happened since the beginning of 2020. It's also natural to imagine that stress leads to violence. Science tells us that stress inhibits judgment, can cause aggression with surges of

adrenaline, and can cause physical illness. Connecting violent crime and stress has been a theory for a long time, but the ultimate weakness in the theory is that if COVID causes stress, and stress causes violence, wouldn't there be even more violence than we've seen since virtually every person in the country is stressed out?

In addition, it seems that if COVID isolation provoked violence, a greater percentage of homicides would be domestic violence. Data are not clear about any significant increase in domestic violence-related homicides, although it is likely to have risen, but the ratio of other types of homicides in relation to total murders doesn't prove this theory yet.

Theory 2 is that because so many firearms were purchased that they were more available and used in more violent crime. There is no question that violent crime involving firearms are frequent, but the population was already saturated with firearms long before 2020. In the US there are enough guns for everyone to have one, and guns are present in at least 40% of households. Gun sales have hit historic highs for reasons that likely include fear of civil disturbances and fear of gun ownership restrictions that may follow from a change in Presidents. More guns means more crimes, in the minds of analysts who want this to be a fact.

The reality is that even though the increase in gun sales may mean more first-time gun owners, that isn't likely. It also isn't likely that the criminal element is the population buying up guns and ammo. If there were some known ratio of firearm ownership to violent crime,

we could predict a certain rise in crime based on gun sales, but no such predictive ratio exists.

There are other theories but, like everything else in 2020, opinions and data are scrambled and hard to compare to a baseline.

There are reasons to believe the anti-police political rhetoric is the root of the increased violence. Legislators across the country are on a campaign to get and keep more criminals on the street. Prosecution of police officers, release of offenders without bail, increasing liability exposure of police officers, prohibition on enforcing traffic laws, removal of necessary weapons and arrest control techniques, discouraging lawful suspicious person contacts, and excusing criminal behavior in a twisted version of acceptable protest. Police funding is at risk. Recruiting is more challenging. Retirement is more appealing. Why would observers be shocked to see rising violent crime?

Good citizens make rational decisions. They report crime because they trust the police. They buy guns because they know that police are restrained and overburdened. These indicators point to the suppression of policing. Lawbreakers make calculations. They make rational decisions. They figure out risks and rewards. They know that the police are being discouraged and restrained from doing what they were hired to do. They make the calculation that maybe now, criminal activity is worth it.

And maybe it is.

What Gets Lost When Police Budgets Get Cut

Somewhere there may be a bloated law enforcement budget. Too many officers with nothing to do. Too much fancy equipment with no usefulness. Cobwebs growing on desk-bound paper-pushers kept around while they wait for their pension. If such a place exists it's no place I've ever worked. The more likely scene is dispatchers pushing non-emergency calls to the bottom of the list, patrol officers trying to find a time for a meal break, and detectives trying not to break the department's over-time budget.

As populations and demands for services grow, police agencies eventually find that their patrol officers have too many and diverse responsibilities to have expertise and efficiency in all areas. This requires police leaders to examine the community's needs for specialized units. The goal of specialized units is to allow patrol response to remain robust by relieving them of some demands that can be time-consuming and require specialized knowledge.

Investigations

When funding is cut, the essential service of responding to 911 calls must be preserved. Police administrators often redeploy officers from investigative responsibilities back to uniformed patrol. While this may sound to the public like those non-patrol staff are not essential, investigations will necessarily suffer.

Following up on criminal investigations is more time consuming than ever. Physical evidence, including DNA, must be collected, preserved, and analyzed to meet not only legal standards but the unrealistic expectations of juries primed by fictional stories from television and movies. Tedious documentation must be flawless. If a lead is not followed up, the defense will claim that police failed to consider other theories or suspects and unfairly focused on their defendant.

Victim services will suffer because cases will fall through the cracks with insufficient attention and resources. The flow of cases that are referred for further investigation will not stop just because a detective's desk is empty while she is back in uniform. If patrol officers are required to handle more of their own cases past the initial report, they could be out of service for 911 response and contributing to the problem of reduced staffing that began the cycle of shortage in the first place.

Traffic

Many departments are being forced to reduce their traffic violations enforcement. This may mean fewer traffic contacts or the elimination of traffic units designed to investigate crashes and proactively get drunk and drugged drivers off the roadways. As part of the \$150,000,000 cut to LAPD's budget, patrol officers will not be responding to minor crashes with no serious injury. A minor crash on paper doesn't seem like a minor crash to those involved. Injuries that seem minor at the scene can mask serious conditions to arise later. Insurance companies and attorneys will be without

objective police documentation to hold careless drivers accountable. More drunk drivers and road ragers will escape attention and continue to pose a threat to the public.

Special Teams

Air support, explosive response, special weapons and tactics units, undercover investigations, computer crime units, K9 officers, human trafficking, fraud and white-collar crime investigations all potentially suffer from budget cuts. Air support, for example, is an expensive line item that is ripe for redlining but is very productive in ways that belie the expense.

Administrative tasks that require police experience often seem redundant, but the officers who are overseeing research, budgets, training, grants, intelligence analysis, and a host of other things that grease the wheels of the department's mission are essential. Without their work, the efficiency of the officers on the street can be diminished.

Community Relations

The public will always expect a response to their call for service. They will expect that crimes against them will be solved. They will not remember that the budget was cut while they stood by and allowed it to happen. There's very little expert opinion that denies that crime will increase. The experiment of having non-law enforcement responses to mental health, civil disputes, and "minor" offense will not justify taking money from

the police budget to pay for civilian personnel to handle these “non-essential” police functions.

Police budgets aren’t like business and family budgets. If there is fat to be trimmed, that’s fiscally responsible to the taxpayer. More likely, agencies will be cutting into the meat of their mission to satisfy the activists demanding fewer resources. If the police department suffers, the public will suffer.

The Backpedaling Continues

It seems that the rush to push through laws, policies, and budget restraints on law enforcement is hitting some snags.

In Minnesota where a city ballot issue is scheduled to go to voters in November to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department, the state Supreme Court invalidated a portion of the ballot language. The court's opinion did not deal with the substance of the issue but did say that some of the wording was misleading. It may simply be that the impatient police defunding contingent were so anxious to begin the deconstruction of Minneapolis law enforcement that they overlooked the laws requiring fair ballot language.

In a separate matter, another Minnesota court prohibited a new, restrictive use of force law from going into effect until an appeal can be heard from law enforcement organizations.

Meanwhile, the Minnesota Supreme Court has overturned a 3rd degree murder conviction of former Minneapolis police officer Mohamed Noor because an element of the charge requires a "depraved mind" that the court said didn't apply in the Noor case. He still faces sentencing on a lesser charge of manslaughter. The ruling is likely to affect the Chauvin case in the death of George Floyd. Though the legal analysis can be complicated, the ruling may indicate the trend of overcharging police officers faced with prosecution in use of force cases.

In New York a grand jury refused to indict an officer who used what appeared to be a banned “chokehold” while arresting a resisting suspect in June of 2020. The grand jury proceedings are secret, but the officer’s attorney stated that the officer’s testimony was believed by the panel that the force was necessary and ceased immediately when the arrestee was safely handcuffed. There exists, then, hope that when the realities of a police officer’s necessary actions are heard by objective citizens the truth can prevail.

Chicago and Philadelphia are two major police agencies that have negotiated significant wage increases after long discussions. Other agencies have been adding COVID related bonuses, while still others are offering hefty bonuses in recruiting efforts. Many agencies have reinstated money to police budgets after hasty cuts in concession to defunding advocates.

In another development that should provide some relief to police agencies burdened by federal oversight, US Attorney General Garland has issued new rules for federal monitoring. When the federal government has reason to believe that a police agency is operating in a discriminatory manner, the agency faces costly and lengthy litigation. To avoid that, an agency may enter into an agreement in which federal monitors have tremendous power over the agency’s operation. The resulting effect can be onerous to the agency which suffers a loss of autonomy.

These consent decrees have had mixed results and big expenses. The effect on department morale can be

harmful, and taxpayers can be billed millions in costs for the oversight, with no guarantee of when the process will end. Garland's plan is to require training for monitors, reduce opportunistic billing, provide clearer end dates for the process. Federal oversight operations have lasted over a decade in some cities.

Police leaders have argued for these policies for many years. Interventions decreased under the Trump administration with Attorney General Sessions concern that the efforts are evidence of federal overreach. With the expectation that the number of federal interventions will increase under the Biden administration, the new constraints are welcomed.

These small victories provide a glimpse of encouragement to those who hold hope that the tide of anti-police sentiment will turn in the face of increased crime and disorder. For observers and practitioners of law enforcement – or anyone with a lick of common sense – predicted that the drastic and reactionary anti-police measures that swept the country would have disastrous consequences for ordinary citizens. As these predictions continue to come true, the political impact is being felt by the short-sighted proponents of weakening American law enforcement.

Hopefully, the voters will make elected officials who have damaged the rule of law by crippling its enforcement become unemployed or make better decisions for public safety.

Colorado's Police Reform Law Imperils Its Officers

The hypocrisy of politicians who switch from condemning to praising police officers is dizzying. The same Colorado Governor who gleefully signed new punitive laws against police officers in 2020 is distraught over the death of Officer Eric Talley who was among those killed in the supermarket mass shooting in Boulder, Monday, March 22nd. High publicity affairs such as this tragedy never fail to tickle the public relations trigger. Surely the grief expressed by lawmakers is genuine in the moment, but will not last when it comes to voting on anti-police legislation.

Hopefully, the Talley family can withstand the politicization of the debates that will surround his heroic death. But if laws matter, citizens must take action when bad laws put public safety at risk. The Colorado legislature recently passed new measures under the ironic title of Enhance Law Enforcement Integrity. How might those laws have impacted our fallen officer?

If Talley had failed to activate his body-worn camera while under fire and dealing with a mass killer, the law would have made a presumption that Talley was doing something inappropriate. The statute states "THERE IS A PERMISSIVE INFERENCE IN ANY INVESTIGATION OR LEGAL PROCEEDING, EXCLUDING CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THE PEACE OFFICER, THAT THE MISSING FOOTAGE WOULD HAVE REFLECTED MISCONDUCT BY THE PEACE OFFICER.

IF A PEACE OFFICER FAILS TO ACTIVATE OR REACTIVATE HIS OR HER BODY-WORN CAMERA AS REQUIRED BY THIS SECTION OR TAMPERS WITH BODY-WORN OR DASH CAMERA FOOTAGE OR OPERATION WHEN REQUIRED TO ACTIVATE THE CAMERA, ANY STATEMENTS SOUGHT TO BE INTRODUCED IN A PROSECUTION THROUGH THE PEACE OFFICER RELATED TO THE INCIDENT THAT WERE NOT RECORDED DUE TO THE PEACE OFFICER'S FAILURE TO ACTIVATE OR REACTIVATE THE BODY-WORN CAMERA AS REQUIRED BY THIS SECTION OR IF THE STATEMENT WAS NOT RECORDED BY OTHER MEANS CREATES A REBUTTABLE PRESUMPTION OF INADMISSIBILITY”.

So not only has the Colorado legislature deemed that any failure to turn on a camera (no exceptions for dealing with an active mass killer) is presumptively a sign of misconduct, a criminal case where such an oversight occurred can be put at risk for inadmissibility of evidence. And, by the way, if an administrative hearing determines that the officer violated the camera edict, the officer will be stripped of their state certification which means an end to their career.

What if Officer Talley, in dealing with the chaos of this event, had harmed an innocent person? Would he have been protected by qualified immunity from lawsuit? The development of qualified immunity was a direct result of the understanding that when the law requires a government actor to engage in their duty, and the circumstances are unique enough that there is no clearly established guideline for dealing with the situation, the officer's judgment will be given the benefit

of the doubt. No more in Colorado. They were the first state in the nation to eliminate qualified immunity – but only for law enforcement officers of course. Other government actors, legislators, judges, and prosecutors kept their immunities.

In addition to laws that already require officers to report fellow officers for excessive force, the law requires an officer to intervene or face penalties. A reasonable idea on paper, but not reasonable to the officer in a life or death struggle who knows facts even a fellow officer may not know. An event filmed years ago caused an officer to be brought up on charges for unnecessary force until the officer was able to prove that while placing a suspect against the hood of a car that the suspect grabbed the officer's testicles and did not let go until the officer forced the suspect harder against the car. Only the officer knew the facts at the time and, had another officer intervened, the suspect could have continued his attempt to escape.

And what if Officer Talley had, in the fog of combat and quest to save lives, injured an innocent person and a judgment was made against him in civil court? Would he have had protection from financial ruin by insurance from his agency? Not in Colorado. The lawmakers decided that officers must pay out of their own pockets even for duty-related judgments if the agency believes the officer did not act in good faith. Good idea – letting the person who has an obligation to pay a bill decide if they should pay the bill or not. I wish the legislature would allow me that decision on my financial obligations.

Colorado is not finished punishing its peace officers. There are proposals to bar police from arresting teenaged students while at school or using handcuffs on some juveniles. A ban on encrypting police radios would keep criminals aware of law enforcement actions, even though monitoring unencrypted police radio traffic was directly implicated in the death of a Colorado officer in 2017. And, of course, legislators will turn from applauding the tactical response to the Boulder shooting which deployed military tactics, gear, and armored vehicles to voting to ban those very tools from law enforcement. Politicians who throttle law enforcement's legitimate needs for protection should be given no license to shed a tear one day and vote against public safety the next.

Police Aren't a Cost, They Are an Investment

The only thing more expensive to a community than funding a police department is not having an adequately funded police department.

September's hurricane Sally hit Alabama with an estimated destruction cost of 3 billion dollars. Like an unexpected storm, estimates from rioting related to the George Floyd in-custody death are estimated at 2 billion dollars. Those numbers are for tangible, insurable damage. Lost opportunities and lost futures are not so easily tallied on a spreadsheet.

Collateral damage

Along with the collateral damage of actual damage from arson and vandalism, the ripple effect of the Floyd protests may incur even more tragic losses, including law enforcement effectiveness. Businesses considering beginning, expanding, or relocating their operations will necessarily look at the quality of public safety infrastructure. One researcher "reports nearly uniformly positive and often statistically significant coefficients on police and fire spending" as it relates to economic development. These measures are more concerned with the quality of service rather than merely dollars spent as a ratio of total government expenses.

What happens when those who are interested in investing in a community see police numbers going

down and crime rates going up? What happens when those with capitol to invest see that the prevailing political philosophy is anti-capitalist? What happens when insurance companies pull out of a high-risk community or dramatically raise rates? What happens when property values go down and take tax revenue out of the local economy?

Enterprises vary but crime rates, insurance costs, risk management, and threat assessments are bottom line considerations for any business. New businesses know that their taxes will be funding public safety and, therefore, have a very real interest in the quality of emergency response capacity. Overall quality of life for their workers and management is measured partly by the level of safety and security.

Costs of quality law enforcement

Providing excellent policing services is an expensive endeavor. Even so, government entity spending on police as a percent of their total budget is not as high as often presumed, ranging from 4% to over 40% at the extreme high end. Staffing and equipment amid increasing demands on law enforcement have, in many cities, resulted in significant increases in expenses over the past decades. Yes, police officers have demanded more in terms of salary and benefits, but challenges in finding qualified candidates have created a supply and demand equation that favors higher compensation. But there are a lot of reasons for higher costs of operation.

The old rule of thumb for police staffing was to have one police officer for every one thousand residents. If

anyone is still calculating budgets using this measure, they could not be more out of touch with modern policing. Staffing depends on the public's expectations for service, response time, and visibility. Dense populations tend to have higher demands for services, and more sparsely populated areas cover more geography that may slow police response.

Even in the face of stable or decreasing crime rates, the time and detail that must be invested in crime response is much greater in modern policing. Processing of crime scenes, given the availability and expectation of DNA tests and scientific instrumentation, takes many hours. Jurors, conditioned to the high expectations of television cops, are reluctant to trust investigations without exhaustive DNA testing and body camera video. Time on task per officer has multiplied to avoid dropped cases and civil liability.

Contingency planning

Most citizens would be shocked at how few police officers are on shift at any given time. For officer safety and to protect the citizens and their government, multiple officers are often required at a scene. In addition, unusual events such as disturbances, major crimes, major fires, natural disaster can occur at any time. Injury and illness can strike a number of officers. Regional events can limit mutual aid assistance from other agencies. Just like in sports, police departments need a bench with enough reserve staffing to maintain high levels of service in extreme circumstances.

With every officer comes service and support staff, protective gear, special event equipment, and expensively equipped patrol and specialty vehicles, none of which are cheap.

Cost of crime

Underfunded police departments can not only discourage economic development and healthy property values. An increase in crime that will follow a reduction in the capacity of law enforcement to prevent, respond to, and effectively investigate criminal activity had direct costs. A Rand research group study in 2010 estimated that every murder inflicts a total cost of over eight million dollars when all losses and expenditures are calculated. Rape inflicts a cost of over \$200,000.00, robbery \$67,000.00, car theft over \$9,000 as examples.

Feelings of safety, confidence in getting a 911 response, and avoiding the costs of crime are all good reasons to continue to invest in policing.

The Real Cost of Defunding

The fast-talking video pitchman pounding on the variety of vehicles available to viewers and flashing the number to call now wasn't a car dealer but a Ft. Worth, Texas police officer [recruiting for applicants](#). While other recruitment efforts are not as clever, similar tactics are being used to convince officers and potential recruits to choose one department over the other. Just like discounts and cash rebates from car dealers, agencies urgently seeking applicants are offering cash bonuses and incentives to get results.

While worker shortages are a challenge across the country and in nearly every enterprise, police jobs used to be the first option for job seekers. The pension plans, job security, and interesting work attracted more applicants than any agency could handle. Today's job market for police officers is wide open to eligible applicants, but not attractive enough to overcome the critiques, hostility, and violence that has been generated against America's police officers.

While violent crime is spiking, cities deal with record-breaking murder rates, and ambush murders of police up 100% in the latest officer fatality statistics cities like Minneapolis, MN where millions had to be added back to the police budget and a judge ordered the hiring of more police officers to Portland, Oregon where defunding was short-lived and 82% of the citizens want more police, communities now waking up to the need for police are doing everything but apologizing to keep up staffing.

Especially valuable to law enforcement agencies needing more cops on duty right away are trained, experienced officers already working for other agencies. These hires, called lateral officers, shorten the agency's training time as well as make the hiring process, including background checks, much simpler.

In times past when there were multiple applicants for every open position, the selection process was tedious and could spread out over many months. Initial testing, then physical performance testing, then psychological testing, a formal physical, and a background investigation were all separate phases requiring an applicant to make multiple visits over several months to complete the process. Many agencies had policies that eliminated anyone with an arrest record and without some college credit. Law enforcement agencies now often have a one or two-day testing process, allow more categories of arrest or drug use history, and are eliminating the college requirement.

Recognizing that many areas have a high cost of living and prohibitive housing costs, some financial incentives are being offered to lure the highly desired lateral candidates. A quick survey of ads for police officers in law enforcement publications shows what appear to be some pretty generous offers. Vancouver, Washington offers a \$25,000 lateral incentive and a \$10,000 entry-level officer bonus. Washington, DC is offering a \$20,000 recruit bonus and a \$6,000 available housing bonus on top of a \$60,000 entry-level salary. Seattle and New Orleans are both offering up to \$30,000.

Tukwilla, Washington, a community of about 22,000 people just south of embattled Seattle, begins its job description with all capital letters addressing what they know is causing officers from many cities to flee to the suburbs: ARE YOU TIRED OF A LACK OF SUPPORT, LACK OF EQUIPMENT, LACK OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND A LACK TIME OFF TO HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF WORK? Addressing other quality of life issues, the agency recruiting material emphasizes health and time off. "We operate in an environment where officer's mental health and wellness comes first. Having happy and healthy officers benefits them, the department and the community we serve. Officers are encouraged to workout on-duty and participate in a variety of benefits and resources to assist them and to maintain a high level of mental and physical fitness. Our officers also enjoy ample time off to enjoy life outside of work with a bank of 236 hours of paid time off in addition to the 96 hours of vacation and 144 hours of sick leave that they accrue annually." With a \$25,000 hiring bonus, the department seems to get to the heart of the recruitment challenge.

Even small agencies such as the 25 officer Pelhem, New Hampshire Police are in the competition. Pelhem is offering \$15,000 more up-front cash.

Early retirements, disinterest in the profession, and officers just plain quitting are all the result of oppressive legislation against law enforcement, reducing the accountability of criminals, unsupportive police administrators fearing for their own jobs, and prosecutors more interested in charging police officers than charging criminals. The cost has been high in increased

crime, increased fear of crime, property damage, and now the need to dig into the treasury in order to make police work seem attractive again.

Putting the Criminal-Friendly Genie Back in the Bottle

For ease of debate, opinions are cast in two categories whether left or right, progressives or conservatives, donkey or elephant. Without playing those cards, the real cultural enemy is across these divides: the permissives – the philosophy to just let things go and excuse destructive behavior. Whether it is prosecutors, lawmakers, or parents, the age-old question of freedom versus accountability remains as the pendulum of natural consequences swings.

One consequence of permissiveness is violence. “Boston police officers have experienced an increased level of physical and verbal assaults as they respond to emergency calls and patrol our neighborhoods”, says City Council President Ed Flynn. Murders in the population and assaults on officers have grown alarmingly, but it’s just another day at the office too abstract and removed from ivory towers. But violence, like cancer, has a tendency to spread beyond its origins. Now that assaults on politicians and other public officials have increased, the cancer of violence is getting closer.

The Director of National Intelligence recently issued a security advisory that states “Over the last five years, there has been an uptick in threats to public officials—to include those at the state and local level to a degree unseen in the past—showcasing the need for first responder awareness, particularly during community-focused special or political events.”

Recent headlines read: “Violent threats against public officials are rising”, “U.S. grapples with rising threats of political violence as 2024 election looms” and “Harassment, Threats, and Violence Directed at Local Elected Officials Rising at an Alarming Rate”. The National Center for Education Statistics show an increase in assaults and threats to elementary and secondary teachers. Doctors and nurses haven’t escaped the trend either. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the rate of injuries from violent attacks against medical professionals grew by 63%

A National League of Cities report states that ‘87% of local officials surveyed observed an increase in attacks on public officials in recent years, while 81% reported having experienced harassment, threats, and violence’. These realities are associated with an increasing reluctance to engage in public service positions from city council to teaching and policing. The number of people fleeing those jobs is creating an unprecedented degree of anxiety among the citizenry.

If one doesn’t see the connection between the assault on our nation’s peacekeepers and caregivers from the defund rhetoric, don’t waste your time on those connect-the-dot puzzles.

Criminologists can chart, graph, and theorize all day but the average citizen with open eyes seeing the problem. We’ve concentrated so much on holding teachers and police officers accountable we’ve collectively lost focus on the front end of bad behavior. We went from zero tolerance for disruption in schools to zero limits on

tolerance. It seems an offender merely has to cite one category of deprivation by racism, mental illness, trauma, economic deprivation, addiction, or other social plague to escape their own choices.

Should authority figures be held accountable for inappropriate acts? Certainly. Should we provide compassion and solutions to offenders who hold hope for change? Certainly. Must we give a pass and green light to anyone with such a claim to continue their patterns of destructive behavior? Clearly not.

Permissiveness can only be balanced by fed-upness. When the citizenry is fed up with living in fear, their voices will be heard at the ballot box. Prosecutors whose utopian idealism for a peaceful society means failure to enforce the law because it might be unfair or cause hardship on an arrestee. No need to make narcotics illegal. No need to make shoplifters hauling hundreds of dollars of merchandise out the door into criminals. The poor mother stealing bread is ideologically the same as the theft of big-screen TVs, racks of clothing. The customer must simply suffer the inconvenience of having everyday items under lock and key, and the store employees who try to stop a thief's escape may be the ones prosecuted. People are being fed up with the envisioned utopia turning bloody and expensive.

Punitive and restrictive laws created by those with no understanding of what it is like to be in today's classrooms or what it means to patrol today's streets while decriminalizing almost everything get passed and forgotten. The only time they look back to see what they

have accomplished is when the headlines scream that their citizens are fed up.

The permissive days of the hall pass, the golden ticket, and the get-out-of-jail card will come to an end as real people suffer the real consequences. When offenders start seeing their criminal peers being jailed instead of their community's caretakers being flogged, society's message will become clear. The law-abiding folks got fed up.

Should Law Enforcement Continue to Have Valuable Tools Taken Away?

In their rush to claim credit for police reform, many states have banned the “choke hold”, tear gas on rioters, and “military” grade equipment. These measures are more likely to get more citizens hurt as well as police officers, because the equipment and techniques are valuable assets in maintaining law and order. The primary problem with many of these measures is that they are not based on knowledge of their use and the circumstances which resulted in their use.

Danger to the resisting subject

The public should know that active resistance is a very dangerous condition for a suspect, not just the officers involved. Conditions of drug influence and intense psychotic behavior can result in violent and unpredictable behavior that is a life-threatening condition. This requires immediate emergency medical intervention that can not be accomplished until the violent person is restrained.

In cases where in custody deaths have occurred, the vast majority have involved polydrug use in which the subject has been exposed to multiple attempts at restraint. These emergency conditions render the body unresponsive to pain, meaning that the officer cannot rely on techniques that cause pain and can be relaxed after compliance.

Officers are often called to these persons due to erratic behavior and disturbances. The person must be taken into custody for their own protection and emergency medical care, as well as for protection of the public. Persons in this condition are typically not rational, and are not amenable to being “talked down” with de-escalation techniques. They may have committed a series of minor offenses in the course of their behavior. Because of the ability to persons in this condition to have no feeling of pain or exhaustion, it can take a great deal of effort and as many officers as are available to get the person restrained. The headline will read that a minor offender was brutalized by police when, in fact, the restraint was a life-saving rescue.

Choke holds

Choking or strangling a person is deadly whether it is done by a police officer or a civilian. Choking and strangling, despite the media’s crediting some police arrest control techniques labeled choke holds or strangle holds, are not part of policing except in life and death struggles where deadly force is required to save a life.

Some legislation and rule making also refers generically to all neck restraints. What has been taught to police for many years as an effective way to cause a violently resisting subject to be momentarily rendered incapacitated is the type of maneuver that very deliberately protects the trachea and front of the neck and, instead, compresses blood flow to the brain causing momentary loss of consciousness. This is generally harmless and is intended for use on persons whose

resistance would otherwise have to be met with other less lethal means, or even deadly force. Removing this technique from the array of tools an officer may use forces officers to use other techniques that may carry more risk to the offender and the officer.

Military Grade Weapons

The continued mythology that police departments are getting military assault vehicles is damaging agency's ability to gain valuable rescue equipment. There are no tanks being given by the military to civilian policing. There are no police departments rolling through their towns with automatic weapons mounted to an assault vehicle.

What does exist are vehicles that are armored to resist gunfire. They are able to enter an active threat zone in order to place officers nearer to an attacker. They are also able to move into an active threat zone to rescue injured civilians or hostages. Most police cars are little defense to even small arms fire. In an active shooter situation, patrol cars are of little value to do the mission of an armored vehicle. Specialized vehicles can safely move in high water and areas otherwise devastated in natural disasters.

Some small police departments have been criticized for obtaining armored vehicles. If there is one thing we've learned about mass casualty attacks and natural disasters, it is that they can happen anywhere.

Law enforcement agencies are best served by vehicles made for civilian law enforcement. The cost of

purchasing a specialized vehicle is prohibitive for many agencies. This is why military surplus vehicles, such as the MRAP, are often obtained at little cost. The MRAP is not ideal for civilian police work, but it has great utility and value when custom tactical vehicles are not a possibility.

Just a Sample

The elimination of just these two assets can leave vulnerable citizens at risk as well as the officers entrusted to protect and serve. Legislators and activists must learn that facts about policing before making rules that harm rather than help their public.

Is Character Assassination Part of Police Reform?

If you're like me, you might miss the day when you could read something in the newspaper and have to wait a few days to see if anyone wrote a letter to the editor about it. Now with immediate reactions affixed to online articles, it takes little effort and little thought to throw out an insult, a threat, or an affirmation.

A tweet from the New York City Police Benevolence Association referred to an article about assaults on police officers, including photos of an injured officer and statistics showing injuries to NYPD officers are up 32% this year, a commentator felt compelled to say "cops have been harassing young people forever". A tweet by a police supporter decrying attacks on officers yielded commentary about "the corrupt weaponizing of police" and "using trained pitbulls against law abiding citizens". When I wrote about police officers having to be alert while off-duty, one Twitter commentator snarked that it means cops can kill whenever they want to.

It is not unusual for me, since I am not difficult to find on social media, to get harassed, threatened, and slandered after an article or radio or television appearance. From depicting me as a farm animal defecating in a pigsty to being described as an ignoramus out of touch with reality (uhm, they didn't read my biography) the particularized, personalized hate due to my defense of the policing profession has been a constant drumbeat since I began writing for online publications a long time

ago. I'm not complaining. It is the cost of standing up for something.

What grieves me is not the criticism, but the irrational venomous hate. And it's not a personal grievance because I don't mind being David to any Goliath out there. What hurts is the embedded broad-brush disrespect that can be found among those clamoring for police reform. Let me be clear that I'm not, in turn, painting reformers with that same broad brush. Where policing needs to improve I'm all in. If we can ease racial tensions, we must. If we can improve performance, let's do it. If we need to refocus, then refocus.

But if we need to cease to exist, as some would desire, that we cannot allow. If we are asked to do more and train more while being robbed of the resources to do so, no reform will come to pass. If we need to stop enforcing the laws that are established by democratic processes by the legislature, it is the legislature that must act. Unfortunately, legislatures have responded not based on crime data and a recognition of law and order, but to the loud and often hateful and violent voices that want policing to simply go away and let people behave themselves. And I'd consent to that if the history of humanity showed hope of that happening. Police-free zones have been tried to tragic result.

The celebrations of criminality and wholesale criticism of law enforcement are literally costing lives and livelihoods as those bent toward crime find favor over those whose task is to prevent and control it. The continued lie of "hands up, don't shoot" remains a common mantra to those with no interest in Truth with

a capital "T". When a sitting President chooses to armchair quarterback police activity against a powerful friend of his and labels officers as "behaving stupidly", then further insults the profession with a non-apology invitation for beer and nuts, the snarling anti-police crowd salivates and grins. When political figures invite survivors of justifiable police intervention to be treated as heroes, the police become, by default, the arch-enemy. When legislatures make stupid decisions (I'm talking to you, west coast) that penalize police officers for being police officers, this is not reform, it's spite and persecution. Those interested in real change must reject the violent and extreme as allies in order to make progress where progress is needed.

If the profession of law enforcement, and the underpinning social contract for orderly co-existence need revision, there is no place for hate and disrespect on either side of an honest debate. In the words of one unlikely philosopher, "Can't we all just get along?"

About The Author



This series is authored by [Chief Joel F. Shults, Ed.D.](#) Joel is a retired police chief. He is an award-winning writer, college professor, trainer, and first responder chaplain.