

Ensure the Safety and Security of Our Communities.

Many Americans in cities big and small do not feel safe or secure. This feeling can lead to a sense of disconnectedness and hopelessness that can affect all city residents and how they relate to one another. Too many feel alienated and disenfranchised. Mayors and local law enforcement officials across America are currently dealing with three immediate and interrelated challenges: building trust between the police and communities, reducing violent crime, and preventing terrorism.

Local law enforcement is the front line in the country's effort to ensure security, justice, and opportunity for all Americans. Despite their best efforts, the nation's cities have neither the resources nor the capability needed to fully deliver on this pledge, without greater support from the federal government. Fulfilling these responsibilities constitutes a national challenge that requires a national response, and it is the obligation of officials at all levels of government to find solutions to these complex problems.

In order to stem the culture of violence in this country, we must identify policy solutions and coordinate investments that can bring our communities together to better utilize our police and address the root causes of violence in America.

The nation's mayors and police chiefs are committed to keeping our people safe. We call on our partners in Washington to recognize their role:

Strengthen Bonds Between Communities and Police. Our communities are safest when our public safety officers are part of the community, engrained in our neighborhoods with faith-based leaders, nonprofits, educators, and small businesses.

- Invest resources directly to cities to support police training in areas including implicit bias, de-escalation, and cultural sensitivity; hiring; technology and equipment; data collection and analysis; use-of-force policies; and officer safety and wellness.
- Expand the funding for and eligible uses of the COPS program.
- Increase Byrne JAG funding.
- Invest additional resources in proven programs that can help to prevent crime and provide hope, such as the CDBG.
- To facilitate a public health response to violence that focuses on prevention and intervention, provide direct federal support to local governments, particularly those with the highest need, so that they can undertake and expand violence interruption and other public health programming.
- Recognize, discuss, and improve the relationship between race and policing.





Expand Homeland Security Grants. The ever-changing threat of terrorism and violence inside our nation's borders is no longer confined to our largest cities. We must be vigilant every day in our efforts to protect our cities and our nation from the threats of domestic terrorism that continue to plague our country. For our communities to be safe, we must recognize the role local government plays in responding to and preventing terrorist attacks.

- Bolster and reform homeland security grant programs to provide funding directly and more broadly to local governments so that officials are better equipped and trained to prevent and respond to domestic acts of terrorism and violent extremism.
- Provide local officials the flexibility to use these funds to meet locally identified priorities, including hiring police officers and undertaking positive engagement with a city's Muslim population.

- Include domestic hate groups and others who promote violence against any communities in our definitions of terrorism and violent extremism.
- Expand FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces, standardize fusion centers, and improve coordination among local, state, and federal law enforcement.
- Provide the protection of federal hate crime laws to all citizens, and join mayors and police chiefs in speaking out against hate crimes and all discriminatory acts whenever they occur.

Invest in Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

Mass shootings and daily incidents of violence across America are often driven by chronic mental health problems and substance abuse. An estimated 2 million people with serious mental illnesses are admitted to jails across the nation each year, and almost three-quarters of these adults have co-occurring substance use disorders. Once incarcerated, individuals with mental illnesses tend to stay longer in jail and are at a higher risk of returning to incarceration upon release.

- Treat violence as both a public safety and a public health problem, focusing efforts on violence prevention and intervention.
- Invest in mental health and substance abuse services: Increase investments in prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation programs.
- Enact bipartisan legislation that would improve and reduce the interactions between mentally ill individuals and the criminal justice system.
- Fully fund the recently enacted Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act.

Reduce Gun Violence. Many cities are seeing an increase in the number of guns on the streets. When shootings occur, more guns, particularly those with high-capacity magazines, are being used and more rounds are being fired, leading to more victims shot, some of whom are children and other innocent bystanders. Each year, nearly 12,000 Americans are murdered with guns. Mayors who deal with this issue in their communities are eager to get beyond the partisan and political issues that stall their ability to help find solutions that will reduce gun violence and keep our people safer.

- Develop a consensus around gun safety provisions that will keep guns out of the hands of terrorists, violent criminals, and others who would use them for illegal purposes.
- Recognize the impact of gun violence on victims of domestic abuse and violence, strengthen laws that require domestic abusers to relinquish firearms upon the issuance of a temporary restraining order, and ensure that all domestic violence prohibiting records are entered into the background check system.
- Treat violence – and in particular the extreme use of guns on the streets of America – as both a public safety and a public health problem that has a disparate impact on our minority communities, particularly young men of color.

Reform the Criminal Justice System and Strengthen Reentry Services. The disparate impact of the way we prosecute and incarcerate in this country negatively impacts our public safety, our economy, and the overall health of our communities. The United States has one of the highest incarceration rates in the world, and according to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 37% of the current prison population is African American¹ and 34% is Latino.²

1. https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_race.jsp

2. https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_ethnicity.jsp

Compounding the impact these incarceration levels have on minority populations are policies – in both the public and private sectors – that make it difficult, if not impossible, for people leaving prison to return to their communities, secure employment and housing, and become contributing members of society.



In 2016, mayors were hopeful that Congress had started to find consensus around reforms that would make the system fairer, smarter, and more cost-effective, while keeping our communities safe and secure. That emerging consensus seems to have fallen by the wayside as “law and order” rhetoric and an emphasis on increased penalties and longer incarcerations have once again taken root.



- Partner with mayors to create a modern criminal justice system that addresses violent crime while supporting neighborhoods and youth most impacted by the current system through investments in community development, youth mentoring, after-school and summer jobs programs, and support services that will help intercept at-risk youth before they enter the system, and address recidivism.
- Establish a National Crime and Justice Commission to review and evaluate all components of the criminal justice system, identify the nature of crime in cities and metropolitan areas today, identify best practices and resources for cities and police departments; and recommend comprehensive reforms aimed at ensuring fairness and equity throughout the justice system.
- Enact bipartisan legislation that would reform some federal sentencing provisions, while preventing release of serious and violent offenders who pose a threat to public safety; help to reduce recidivism;

- increase funding for existing programs that support the reentry of released prisoners to their communities; and support programs that focus on education, workforce training, and economic opportunity.

Recognize the Impact of Immigration Policy on Public Safety and Local Communities. Our democracy was founded on certain principles that distinguish our country as a welcoming and open place where immigrants can secure protection, prosperity, and freedom. As a result, our country has reaped significant social, economic, and cultural benefits. Punitive and discriminatory immigration policies will make our country less safe and will hurt our ability to compete in the global economy. Our country is more compassionate and better than the rhetoric and divisive abuses of power that are coming out of Washington today. America's mayors will continue to foster welcoming and secure cities for all of our residents, regardless of who they are or where they come from.

- Immigration policies must not diminish our nation's standing in the world as a beacon of hope and a bastion of democracy, or our ability to compete and participate in a global economy.
- In conjunction with local law enforcement, mayors are committed to ensuring that all criminals, regardless of their immigration status, are properly adjudicated by the criminal justice system.
- Mayors and their cities oppose any efforts, either through executive action or legislation to deny federal funds to cities that aim to build trusting and supportive relations with immigrant communities.



We believe that the dignity, health, rights, and privacy of all our residents must be respected, and our cities must ensure that members of our immigrant communities are afforded an opportunity to thrive. The time has come for the federal government to pass comprehensive immigration reform that would:

- strengthen our borders while ensuring that state and local law enforcement can remain focused on community policing;
- establish a streamlined visa process to efficiently process seasonal, agricultural, less-skilled, and high-skilled workers;
- provide a uniform system of employment verification;
- implement a framework that enables people of goodwill currently living in the shadows to come out and fully pursue the American dream; and
- until immigration reform is enacted, continue programs that protect the temporary status of Dreamers, as well as the continuation of programs that protect the families of those serving in our armed forces, and that these groups be afforded the opportunity to fully integrate into our communities and our nation.