

POLICE JUSTICE GUIDE

Defining Terms

Reform the Police: Reformers presuppose that police have an essential role in creating a more just society. They acknowledge the current system is flawed but see it as salvageable – policing needs to change in some ways – and advocate for two things simultaneously: enough police to keep violent crime low, and police who are “well-trained enough and tightly constrained enough not to abuse their power.” Unlike the defund movement, reformers want to maintain (or increase) spending levels while adopting and enforcing policies prohibiting things such as profiling and discrimination.

Defund the Police: Defunders support redirecting some money from police departments to social programs, insisting that current levels of spending increase violence and corruption rather than solving it. Although not all defunders present the same proposals, “defunding exists as a suite of public policy ideas premised on investments in individual well-being, community infrastructure, alternative first responder services, and divestment from the use of lethal force.”

Abolish the Police: Abolitionists want to create alternatives to policing by investing in social programs. Long-term, abolitionists do not believe police to be necessary, even for violent crimes. They contend that concepts such as “crime” and “violence” have been constructed by people who have power. Violence, then, is structural, and the “social costs associated with the real functions of police outweigh any benefit they provide.”

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Jesuit Conference

Office of Justice and Ecology

JUSTICE IN POLICING ACT VS. JUSTICE ACT

Note: Because the U.S. has a federalist system of government, much of the policing authority resides at state and local levels. Congress' primary lever for change is budgetary, taking the form of grants. There are many important avenues for change at state and local levels that this chart does not address.

| | Justice in Policing Act (House) | | JUSTICE Act (Senate) | |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Limits chokeholds and other uses of force | Yes | a. Prohibits the use of chokeholds "except when deadly force is authorized" b. Limits use of "less lethal" force only if such force is "necessary and proportional" c. Requires federal officers to identify themselves and issue certain verbal warnings to a suspect prior to the use of force, when feasible | No | Does not restrict the use of deadly or less-lethal force, but does require reporting by law enforcement |
| No-knock warrants | Partially | Sets legal limits on the practice | No | Requires reporting and data collection |
| Racial profiling | Yes | Prohibits racial profiling, although it lacks strong enforcement mechanisms | No | Does not address racial profiling |
| Qualified immunity | Partially | Limits qualified immunity for federal, state, and local enforcement officers | No | Does not address qualified immunity |
| Law enforcement misconduct and disciplinary records | Yes | Creates a National Police Misconduct Registry maintained and requires states that receive federal funding to report such information | Partially | Requires states that receive federal funding to "maintain a system for sharing disciplinary records of law enforcement officers" |
| Body cameras | Yes | Increases use of body cameras by state and local law enforcement while mandating use for federal officers | Yes | Increases use of body cameras by state and local law enforcement |
| Eliminate Federal Programs that Provide Military Equipment to Law Enforcement | Partially | Limits the transfer of certain equipment but does not end the program entirely | No | Does not address the transfer of military equipment |
| Police Unions | No | Does not address police unions | No | Does not address police unions |

For more information on police funding, see: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/police-and-corrections-expenditures>

Sources:

[Police reform, defunding, and abolition, explained](#)

[Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police](#)

[Why "Crime" Isn't the Question and Police Aren't the Answer](#)