

# Sounding off about defunding the police

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [George Floyd killing, Police](#) July 9, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Gadfly's been trying to educate himself on this idea of defunding the police. Today's *Morning Call* had a "Sounding Off" section with five views on the subject.

Join him listening in.

[\*"Defund the police"? Readers debate police reform proposal." Morning Call, July 9, 2020.\*](#)

Some soundbites from the five views:

Different from abolishing and starting anew, defunding police highlights fiscal responsibility, advocates for a market-driven approach to taxpayer money, and has some potential benefits that will reduce police violence and crime.

Data show that 9 out of 10 calls for police are for nonviolent encounters. This does not mean that an incident will not turn violent, but police at times contribute to the escalation of violent force. Police officers' skill set and training are often out of sync with the social interactions that they have to face. Police are mostly trained in use-of-force tactics and worst-case scenarios to reduce potential threats.

Officers respond to everything from potholes in the street to cats stuck up a tree. Police are also increasingly asked to complete paperwork and online forms. It could be argued that reducing officer workload would increase the likelihood of solving violent crimes.

Violent urban crime that drains police time and funds is a symptom of poverty and lack of quality education. More needs to be spent on curing the disease in order to reduce the symptoms.

Now, let's address the "defund the police" demands. Absolutely unacceptable. Police departments need more funding, not defunding. So because of the actions of one rogue cop, obviously a one-percenter, the other 99% of dedicated law enforcement officers will suffer, along with the communities that they serve.

We true Americans cannot allow America-hating groups to use unfortunate isolated incidents as fodder for their misguided agendas.

The usual suspects — radical leftists, anarchists and professional agitators — would love a diminished police presence. If a crime occurred and due to underfunding the police could not respond quickly enough, I believe the negative outcry from the aforementioned groups would be deafening. The same outrage would, of course, be directed at the average citizen who defended family and property and now will be even more vilified by these same groups.

If the goals are to improve police practices and ensure they are accountable for their actions, improve community relations and help all people not be in fear when dealing with police, then funds shouldn't be reduced but be directed to improved and continual police training and recruiting.

I believe the majority of people want a well-trained police presence in their communities. Providing the resources for that is paramount.

What needs to fundamentally change is the relationship between law enforcement and the public (particularly with Blacks). While most police officers and departments are dedicated to serving the public, unfortunately some act more like an occupying force. Too many people have been killed or brutalized by the police, quite unjustifiably, and often simply because they were Black.

This means better training, actual accountability (by an independent body), weeding out authoritarian types or those with anger issues, not using brutality as a form of punishment, de-escalate rather than inflame situations, and working with the public rather than seeing it as the enemy. In other words, operating as peace officers not a police state.

Policing can be done less coercively and remain effective. Camden, New Jersey, has created a new model for this. In 2013, then-Gov. Christie worked with community leaders to disband its police department and reconstitute it as an agency that partners with the residents and earns their trust. Most officers were rehired, but under a different contract and different rules. Crime rates have fallen sharply since.

What are you thinkin'? We may be faced with making a choice in the relatively near future. "Budget season" starts in November.