

Dueling petitions: defund or defend

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police August 18, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police 

Gadfly is not familiar with the online petition scene, but can there be 15,000 Bethlehem residents signing here on [change.org](https://www.change.org)? 20% of our population? Or are there signature-for-hire services out there?

But this is interesting.

The “defunders” candidly seek ultimately the abolition of the police altogether. Their pitch is financial, pointing out that the police budget is 3x that of Community and Economic Development and Health, and that overtime pay is huge. “These numbers are very alarming,” and the money better spent elsewhere.

The defenders pitch fear. The defunders are “radical political activists” who will rain the kind of chaos and terror down on us that we see in Seattle and other places, rending our social fabric, replacing our peace with mayhem and murder.

Defund the Bethlehem Police Department

9,725 signees as of 8/17 8PM

With there being such a widespread eruption of anger due to systemic violence of policing, we are seeing a surge in different options to stop the unjust murders of Black and Brown people by the hands of police officers in communities across America. Even in smaller cities like Bethlehem, we want to make sure that civilians will be protected and prevent such incidences. We ask that the mayor and city council members must defund, and subsequently abolish, the police force in our city. We should instead invest the money into the things that will better our entire community.

For the year 2020, over \$16 million went into police. Only \$7 million went into Community and Economic Development, including health with little over \$2 million. The Bethlehem police department also had the highest earnings of overtime pay in 2019 of any other department with a total of \$500,000. These numbers are very alarming, and we could

dedicate allocating these monies to projects that would benefit the entire community, such as housing, educational and social programs, and healthcare.

While abolishment of the police department is the ultimate goal, we must first take steps to hold our elected officials responsible and defund the police.

Defend the Bethlehem Police Department
5,997 signees as of 8/17 8PM

We are calling on all citizens to preserve, protect and defend the City of Bethlehem's Police Department from recent attacks by radical political activists who intend to defund, dismantle and completely abolish our police.

Right now, the activists' agenda is ringing in our City Council's ears. It's the only voice they hear and many council members are actively agreeing to implement their radical agenda. It is vitally important for law-abiding citizens to send a strong message that we support fair and honest policing and we expect our City Council members to support our police as they preserve our quality of life in Bethlehem.

If we continue to remain silent, our hometown is in danger of experiencing the same skyrocketing chaos, violence and lawlessness already plaguing Philadelphia, New York City, Seattle, Minneapolis, and Portland. Our families' safety and the very social fabric of our community is now at stake.

Several cities have already experimented with defunding, dismantling or restraining their police departments to such a degree that the results have been mayhem and death. Law-abiding citizens who only wish to live their lives in peace in these communities have had to tolerate and live with this terror for days on end – one city for 60 straight days and nights and counting.

Criminals can sense when the police are restrained from their ability to protect us, and the result has been an exponential increase in violent crime, especially in gun violence. New York City is a perfect, recent

example. We cannot allow that reality in our hometown of Bethlehem, PA.

It is urgent that you add your name to this petition today. Please show your support and sign this petition so that Bethlehem City Council and the Mayor hear you! Let them know we have no intention of accepting a community without the brave men and women of our police department. Let the administration know you expect them to support our police with proper funding for the best de-escalation and sensitivity training as well as improved mental health support for police officers. We need to strengthen their skills, not weaken their resources. Please Sign Today!!!