

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS BY STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS ON POLICE REFORMS AND RESPONDING TO DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS

The killing of George Floyd and the ensuing nationwide protests have once again brought to the forefront issues of police violence, systemic racism, and the need for transformation of our justice systems. Only five years ago in the wake of a different series of high-profile killings by police, the nation, led by President Barack Obama, focused on reforming our police departments. Communities, however, have not seen sufficient tangible and meaningful change. Our elected leaders must act. Federal, state, and local leaders should take the following actions immediately to begin to address not only current circumstances but also the foundational issues around policing.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS BY GOVERNORS AND MAYORS

Local and state officials must not only respond to the protests taking place across the country but also take important immediate steps to reform their police departments and begin to rebuild trust with the communities they serve. In addition to the action steps described below, elected officials must make a long-term commitment to police reform. Achieving meaningful change is not an easy process, but one that is crucial to the safety and wellbeing of American communities. State and local leaders should:

1. **De-Escalate.** In cities across the country, video footage from media and civilians has shown the police using aggressive tactics and blatant excessive uses-of-force when responding to protestors. These strategies are dangerous and harmful even in circumstances where some in the crowd are destroying property. Mayors must press and even order police departments to de-escalate in these situations. De-escalation is a cornerstone of policing reform and must drive police responses not only in individual interactions but also when faced with mass demonstrations.
2. **Publicly state that you will not ask the Department of Defense to have active duty U.S. military personnel provide assistance in responding to protests or demonstrations.** President Trump's actions, directives, and rhetoric last night inflamed tensions and pitted communities against their government. The divisiveness must be strongly condemned, and local leaders must also prove their commitment to constitutional policing by restraining the police from using excessive force when responding to demonstrations and enforcing curfews.
3. **Require officers responding to demonstrations to practice physical distancing.** The country is still in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, and policing practices must change and adapt to these circumstances – even when responding to mass demonstrations. This includes reducing custodial arrests as well as citing and releasing people if necessary, instead of jailing them in overcrowded facilities where the risk of contracting the virus is significant.
4. **Provide transparency by publicizing the protocols for investigating and prosecuting police brutality cases in conjunction with the police department and district attorney.** If those protocols are deficient or non-existent, announce immediate steps to develop them in cooperation with members of impacted communities.



5. **Establish law enforcement misconduct databases at the local and state levels.** Prosecutors such as Philadelphia District Attorney [Larry Krasner](#) have compiled lists of police officers who have committed misconduct and therefore should either be dismissed or are not reliable witnesses during the prosecution of a case. This information is essential for the fair and just administration of law and to build public confidence in the police and the criminal justice system.

RESOURCES FROM THE CENTER

- [“What We Should Expect of the Police: Experts Weigh In on Recent Police Violence,”](#) by Ed Chung and Betsy Pearl
- [“Expanding the Authority of State Attorneys General to Combat Police Misconduct,”](#) by Connor Maxwell and Danyelle Solomon
- [“Policing During the Coronavirus Pandemic,”](#) by Ed Chung, Betsy Pearl, and Lea Hunter
- [“The Intersection of Policing and Race,”](#) by Danyelle Solomon