

# When protesters say "defund the police," what does it mean?

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Protesters rally June 3, 2020, in Phoenix, Arizona, demanding the Phoenix City Council defund the Phoenix Police Department. The protest was prompted by the death of George Floyd, a black man, at the hands of police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25. Photo: Matt York/AP

Across America, protesters are in the streets. They are demonstrating about the death of George Floyd and other black Americans killed by police. Now, many are taking up a new demand. They are pushing to "defund the police."

But what does "defund the police" mean? It is a call to take funds, or money, away from the police. But that can mean different things. It's not necessarily about making huge cuts to police department budgets.

But some people want to go even farther than defunding. They want to shut down police departments. They say police departments could be replaced with other ways of keeping people safe.

## What Is The "Defund The Police" Movement?

Supporters of defunding say it isn't about getting rid of police. It isn't about taking away all of their money either. They say it's about fixing deep problems in policing. Partly, that means spending less on policing, and more on things such as housing and education. Doing that could help solve many of society's problems, they believe.

Activists want to shift some of what police now do to other people and organizations. Communities should have a bigger role as well, they say.

### **What Are Lawmakers Saying?**

Cory Booker is a New Jersey senator. He says Americans are over-policed. The large amount of money spent on policing "is not solving problems," he said. Instead, it's "making them worse."

Karen Bass is a California congresswoman. She leads the Congressional Black Caucus. She doesn't believe police departments should be disbanded. But she does think policing should be rethought.

What about President Donald Trump? He thinks the "Defund the Police" movement might help him. Trump believes it will scare many voters who think crime would go up. He hopes some will switch their vote to him. That way, he could win this year's election.

### **Is There Any Push To Actually Defund Police Departments?**

Yes, there is.

Bill de Blasio is the mayor of New York City. He now backs defunding. He says the city will take some funding from the police department. It will be put into social services.

Eric Garcetti is the mayor of Los Angeles. He also backs defunding. He plans to cut \$150 million from his police department's budget.

Minneapolis lawmakers plan to go even further. The city council wants to disband the city's police department. The council hasn't yet said what would replace it.

### **How Have Police Officials And Unions Responded?**

Police are strongly against defunding. They say it would make cities less safe.

The Los Angeles Police Protective League is the major police union in L.A. It represents L.A. police in getting better pay and protecting jobs. Almost 10,000 police are members of it. The protective league spoke out against defunding.

The union mentioned looting and violence that happened in Los Angeles. Defunding would be the worst thing you could do, says the union. It would put people in danger.