

Republicans are Missing in Action on the Police Staffing Crisis

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Our nation is in the middle of a police staffing crisis claiming innocent victims and contributing to destroying our greatest cities. Few qualified officers are available for crime prevention initiatives, to staff special police units, and to respond to calls for service — including those categorized as potentially life-threatening.

One of the more troubling examples is Chicago, where its police department has lost about 11 percent of its patrol officers since March 2020. The fallout has been severe. In 2021, there were no Chicago police officers available to respond to 52 percent of the 788,000 high-priority calls.

Democratic policies, proposals and actions have been the catalyst for demoralizing our nation's guardians, most of whom approach their work with honor and dignity. Attempts to eradicate qualified immunity, the creation of false narratives and the zealous prosecution of police officers have taken an emotional toll. As a result, police officers have concluded that this profession is no longer worth the risks.

While the left may have set this in motion, the Republican response has been anemic. It's not just that Republicans frequently miss opportunities to speak out when officers are unfairly under fire. Their legislative efforts have also been lackluster.

If passed, the Protect & Serve Act of 2023 would create a new federal crime category and minimal sentence for knowingly assaulting a police officer and causing severe bodily harm. At a time when ambush-style attacks on law enforcement have been on the rise, this bill would serve as a deterrent and give police officers a much-needed show of support.

This bill, a legislative priority of the Fraternal Order of Police, was introduced in February. Yet, it has garnered just 78 co-sponsors in the House, 67 of them Republicans. And, to date, there have been no hearings scheduled.

At the state level, Florida enacted the Combating Violence, Disorder, and Looting and Law Enforcement Protection Act in 2021. It's arguably the most comprehensive piece of state-level public safety legislation in the nation, and it's been widely praised by members of Florida law enforcement.

In part, it prevents municipalities from defunding police departments, holds cities accountable for ordering officers to stand down during riots, and mandates sentencing for intentionally striking a police officer.

The only other state that has thus far proposed a similar bill is Mississippi, with its Combating Violence, Disorder and Looting And Law Enforcement Protection Act. The bill, which would have created a mandatory imprisonment sentence, fine (or both) for assaulting an officer, died in committee.

Granted, our nation is facing an array of pressing issues vying for the attention of elected officials. Yet, few issues are more critical than ensuring the safety and welfare of the American citizenry. Keeping the public safe begins primarily with ensuring that police departments are adequately staffed with qualified men and women.

As our cities become increasingly uninhabitable and innocents victimized, few in positions of power are doing much to address it.

Although Democratic policies have gotten us to this point, Republicans still have a long way to go before they can refer to themselves as the party of law and order.

ABOUT THE WRITER

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