

## Transactive Discussion Defunding the Police

Please read the following prompt and quotes. In small groups, discuss the questions below.

The killings of George Floyd (May, 2020) and Breonna Taylor (March, 2020) at the hands of police officers sparked global protests against the police brutality and racial injustice Black Americans face. A major demand of these protests (referred to as Black Lives Matter protests) is police reform.

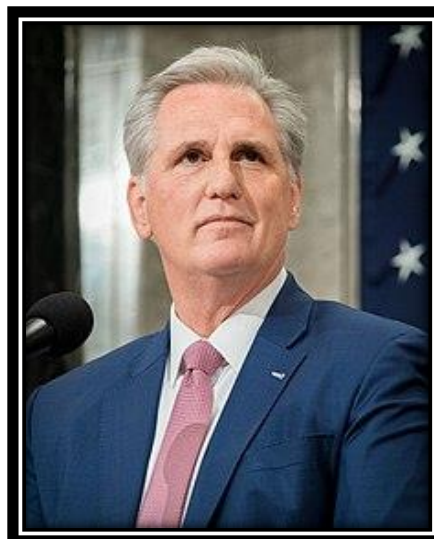
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One possible solution that has gained increased attention amidst these protests is the Defund the Police movement. In the Defunding the Police movement, state and city budget money that is given to police departments would be reinvested toward other public services and forms of public safety, such as education, housing, or healthcare. In many cities across America, police departments receive the largest amount of a city's budget compared to other services. Chicago, for instance, gives 40% of its city's general funds to the police force. Supporters of the Defund the Police movement argue that increasing budgets to implement reform focused on bias reduction and anti-racist training has not been effective and that communities would improve if money were distributed towards other forms of public safety.

Critics argue defunding the police would not necessarily make communities safer and there is not a well-developed plan in place on how to deal with crime that occurs. They believe Defunding the Police may have a harmful affect leading to increased crime, extended wait times on 911 calls, and longer police investigations. In areas that are "police-free" zones, there have been incidences of violence which has made many Americans wary of completely defunding the police. According to a poll conducted in June 2020, 64% of Americans were opposed to defunding police departments.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/05/defunding-the-police-us-what-does-it-mean>; <https://www.npr.org/sections/live-updates-protests-for-racial-justice/2020/07/09/889618702/police-viewed-less-favorably-but-few-want-to-defund-them-survey-finds>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/22/us/seattle-autonomous-zone-chop-shootings.html>.



"A new way forward can't be put in place if we have a department that is having a crisis of credibility, if we have a department that's led by a chief who's suited for racism, if we have a department that hasn't solved homicide — half of the homicides in Minneapolis police department go unsolved. There have been cases where they've destroyed rape kits. And so you can't really reform a department that is rotten to the root. What you can do is rebuild.... If you had a company that wasn't producing, you wouldn't just pour more money into it so that it would produce. You would step back and say, let's look at what works, what doesn't work, and how do we move forward."

*-Ilhan Omar, U.S. Representative from Minnesota*

"We should be providing more money for training. If you look at the recent studies by Chiefs of Police, 80 percent of them said there is a greater need for training. We want the very best officers out there so we should provide better training and transparency. And then you want accountability. 99% of all officers believe and put their life on the line to protect and serve us. But what about the 1% of bad apples? We've got to be able to remove those individuals... If we have better performance, better transparency, and better accountability we will have a much better solution to this problem."

*-Kevin McCarthy, U.S. Representative from California*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Given what you have read, including the quotes above, which perspective on this topic do you align with more, and why?
2. Using answers from Question #1, can you integrate the two perspectives or find a compromise between the two positions?
  - a. If not, why?
  - b. If so, what would the solution look like?