Task Force: Redesigning the Police System

Congratulations! You have just been elected mayor of your city. While on the campaign trail, many voters expressed to you that they did not feel safe when interacting with the police force in the city. You have decided that redesigning the system of policing in the city will be a priority for your first year in office.

Why Are We Doing This? The role of police and the system of policing in the United States is highly criticized by racial justice advocates, mental health professionals, and many others. Some common criticisms include: the legacy of racism within policing, overpolicing minority communities, excessive use of force, bringing weapons to mental health calls, and insufficient training of officers. Some cities have already begun experimenting with alternatives to police that can help promote public safety, such as having unarmed social workers respond to calls regarding mental health incidents.

Steps

1. Research historical and current issues with police systems. What do different groups say should be redesigned about police systems? What are some ideas that have been proposed?
   a. What's the difference between ideas for reforming, defunding, or abolishing police?
   b. What are some issues and ideas that are specific to your city? What is the current police budget compared to other departments? Can you find any statistics on the most common types of calls that police get?

2. Next, craft your redesign plan. Think about:

    a. What issues do you think are most important to prioritize?

    b. How will your plan increase public safety?

    c. If your plan involves reforming existing police departments, how will you ensure your changes are implemented?

    d. If your plan involves reducing police budgets, where will you redirect the money?

    e. If your plan involves abolishing the police department, what mechanisms of public safety will you choose to implement?

3. Think through the possible objections to your plan. How will you defend your plan to people who disagree?

4. Share with the group and see if you can convince them that your plan will help increase public safety and address longstanding issues with policing.

Things to Keep in Mind:

- You do not have to come up with an exhaustive policy. It's better to come up with a few ideas that you feel confident with and spend time thinking through possible objections to them.

- You don't have to worry about answering all possible objections, but you should have some defense of why you think your idea would work.

- Your suggestions should be things that states could realistically implement.