

A Reallocation of Funds at the Federal, State and Local Level From Policing and Incarceration (JAG, COPS, VOCA) to Long-Term Community Based Safety Strategies Such As Education, Local Restorative Justice Services, and Employment Programs

What is the problem?

- Reinvestment of federal grants (JAG, COPS and VOCA) to education, employment and restorative justice services in Black communities most impacted by the mass incarceration and crime.
- In the last few decades, the federal government has thrown billions of dollars at state and local governments to fund quickly expanding police forces and jails. Since Sept. 11, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) alone has given between $30 billion and $40 billion in direct grants to state and local law enforcement, as well as other first responders. The federal government doled out an additional $376 million to state and local law enforcement in 2013 through the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Grant program. That was down from more than $1 billion in 1998. And of course there is the estimated $5 billion worth of surplus military equipment that the has gone to local law enforcement, 20 college campuses and over 20 school districts through the Department of Defense's (DOD)1033 Program. These funds are given with little or no oversight and there is no accountability mechanism.
- Moreover, there is no evidence that the massive spending on incarceration reduces crime rates or keeps communities safer. Studies do show that jobs and education make communities stronger and keep them safer. Investments in community based drug and mental health treatment, education, universal pre-K, and other social institutions can make communities safer while improving life outcomes for all. Children who do not participate in the preschool programs are 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. And youth who participate in summer job programs in Chicago saw a 43 percent decrease in arrests over a 16-month period. Studies show that jobs and education do not just make communities stronger — they make them safer.

What does this solution do?

- The federal government should reallocate funding currently dedicated to policing and incarceration and instead invest those funds in long-term safety strategies such as educational, community restorative justice and employment programs that have been shown to improve community safety.

Federal Action:



- Target: Legislative
- Process: Congress would have to amend the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005, change the formula-based awards to end the mandated support of police departments, and make explicit that community based crime prevention (restorative justice) and long-term safety strategies (youth employment and educational programs) are permissible grantees for the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program.

- Target: Department of Justice (DOJ)
- Process: While a sizable portion of JAG grants are formula-based (meaning that departments automatically receive funds based on congressional formulas), the DOJ has some discretion in how much funding it awards to police departments. Additionally, the DOJ has full discretion in the granting of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and other grant funds. In 2015, the COPS office gave $163 million to police departments across the country. The DOJ should prioritize grants to community based organizations focusing on restorative justice, employment and education.

How does this solution address the specific needs of some of the most marginalized Black people?

- Any reduction in funds for prisons and policing would benefit all marginalized Black people because of the disproportionate impact that policing and incarceration have on them. Additionally, depending on how funds are reallocated, specific groups such as LGBTQ, trans or homeless people, could be prioritized for funding.

Model Legislation

- No model legislation exists.

Resources:

- Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program
- The Flow of Money and Equipment to Local Police

Organizations Currently Working on Policy:

- No organizations are currently working on this

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