
POLICING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

1 **WHEREAS:**

2 It is past time for our nation to declare that Black lives matter and to make that declaration
3 meaningful by confronting the dysfunctional cultures and systemic racism that persist in too many
4 police departments and throughout our society; and

5 **WHEREAS:**

6 AFSCME acknowledges and respects the work and dedication of our public safety officer
7 members who put their lives at risk every day to serve and protect the public without regard to race,
8 color and creed and we recognize the complex challenges law enforcement confront and face
9 throughout the nation; and

10 **WHEREAS:**

11 AFSCME member law enforcement officers have dedicated their careers to serving their
12 communities in a difficult, often thankless and dangerous job. AFSCME law enforcement members
13 and leaders have expressed disgust at the murder of George Floyd, and do not want to serve in
14 departments that routinely violate people's rights or work alongside bigoted or abusive fellow
15 officers; and

16 **WHEREAS:**

17 Many police departments across the country have cultivated a militarized organizational
18 culture where officers are taught that domination and force is the best way to protect themselves and
19 suppress crime, rather than promoting public safety by building mutual trust and respect with the
20 communities they serve; and

21 **WHEREAS:**

22 Black Americans are especially targeted by hostile policing, including aggressive stops,
23 excessive force and unjustified killings. Black Americans are more likely to be stopped by police
24 than any other group. Police are twice as likely to threaten or use force against Black and Hispanic
25 people than whites. Black men are two and a half times more likely than white men to be killed by
26 police during their lifetimes, and Black men are twice as likely as white men to be unarmed when
27 shot. Biased policing and excessive force inflict physical and psychological trauma on Black people
28 and other marginalized communities and constitute a public health threat; and

Committee
Assignment _____

Committee
Recommendation _____

Convention
Action _____

29 **WHEREAS:**

30 The breakdown of trust between communities of color and law enforcement limits the
31 effectiveness of police in promoting public safety, leaving marginalized people more vulnerable to
32 crime; and

33 **WHEREAS:**

34 Police departments, elected officials, individual officers and their unions all have roles to play
35 in putting an end to systemic racism, dysfunctional cultures and abusive practices in law enforcement
36 wherever they exist; and

37 **WHEREAS:**

38 The calls to strip law enforcement officers' collective bargaining rights or to expel all police
39 unions from the labor movement are misdirected. It is a bedrock principle of our movement and our
40 union that all working people, including law enforcement officers, deserve the right to join together
41 and collectively bargain for better pay and fair treatment on the job; and

42 **WHEREAS:**

43 Billionaire-funded, right-wing organizations are cynically using this moment of moral
44 reckoning to advance their anti-worker agenda. These groups, who consistently advocate for policies
45 that hurt communities of color, are now seeking to weaken unions in the guise of addressing police
46 abuses.

47 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

48 AFSCME supports a justice agenda that promotes safer communities by increasing
49 accountability in policing and ending militaristic practices that divide police from the communities
50 they protect and serve; and

51 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

52 AFSCME affiliates, especially affiliates representing public safety officers, are encouraged to
53 demand a seat at the table whenever reforms of policing and criminal justice are being considered.
54 During those discussions, AFSCME leaders at all levels of the union are called upon to support and
55 act consistent with the policies of this resolution; and

56 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

57 AFSCME will advocate for federal funding to create a civilian corps of unarmed first
58 responders such as social workers, EMTs, and trained mental health professionals who can work in
59 partnership with police officers and handle nonviolent emergencies including order maintenance
60 violations, mental health emergencies, and low-level conflicts outside the criminal justice system.
61 This will free police officers to concentrate on the most serious crimes. These partnerships can work
62 to de-escalate interactions with the public and when appropriate, divert individuals to the social
63 services they need; and

64 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

65 AFSCME does not support divestment from public services, including policing. AFSCME
66 demands more funding for education, behavioral health, housing, social services, public facilities,
67 and other programs and services which enhance the safety and well-being of the public. The setting
68 of budget priorities and the proper allocation or reallocation of resources devoted to public safety
69 should be decided at the community level, given each community's unique circumstances, size and
70 needs and with due regard for the vital role played by the civilian employees who support public
71 safety operations. AFSCME believes communities can benefit from having police responsibilities
72 more tightly focused on public safety and criminal activity rather than being asked to perform duties
73 unrelated to public safety such as health and social services; and

74 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

75 Responsibility for investigating serious police misconduct involving use of force should be
76 shifted from police departments and local prosecutors to impartial individuals who do not work as
77 closely with the officers or department in question. In some cases, as in Minnesota, that may be state
78 attorneys general; and

79 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

80 AFSCME supports the hiring of qualified officers for future vacancies who are committed to
81 racial equality, and recruiting and hiring candidates that are traditionally underrepresented in law
82 enforcement so that police departments reflect the diversity of and live in the communities they serve.
83 Police departments should consider residential hiring incentives and outreach programs to youth; and

84 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

85 AFSCME supports a national database to prevent officers who have been removed from
86 employment or who have resigned while facing allegations of flagrant misconduct from being
87 reemployed by another law enforcement agency. State certification agencies should act swiftly on
88 decertification referrals in these cases; and

89 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

90 Chokeholds should be banned and use of force deployed only when no reasonably effective
91 alternative exists. Clear use of force standards should be developed, and officers should be trained in
92 their implementation. Officers should be obligated to intervene to stop or prevent unnecessary or
93 excessive use of force by another officer; and

94 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

95 The federal government should stop militarizing police presence on the streets and
96 substantially reduce funding for programs that militarize public safety. The federal government must
97 redouble its efforts to keep law enforcement officers safe by providing body armor, and public safety
98 agencies must meet their responsibility for adequately equipping officers so they may keep
99 themselves and the public safe. AFSCME condemns President Trump’s misuse of the National Guard
100 and militarization of federal law enforcement agencies against civilians protesting in the wake of
101 George Floyd’s murder; and

102 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

103 The intentional filing of a false statement regarding use of force by an officer should be
104 grounds for termination. Due process for officers should not impede the development of an accurate
105 factual record of the circumstances involving the use of force; and

106 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

107 All officers should be proficient in de-escalation techniques, crisis intervention, cultural
108 awareness, implicit bias, and peer intervention. National accreditation standards should be established
109 that require all officers be trained in these and other best practices from around the world at the
110 academy and on the job as part of continuing education; and

111 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

112 Employers of public safety and first responders must provide more robust mental health
113 assistance including qualified counselors for critical incident stress management, Post Traumatic
114 Stress Disorder, and behavioral health issues. Personnel must be able to confidentially access such
115 programs without fear of stigma or penalty; and

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

117 Laws should be revised so that minor infractions are decriminalized to reduce over-policing
118 of communities of color. Citizen led advisory groups should be established to work closely with their
119 police precincts to foster relationships and accountability and help set priorities and approaches to
120 protecting and serving the community; and

121

122 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

123 AFSCME supports substantial changes to the criminal justice system including:

124 a. limiting when cash bail is required for nonviolent offenses and offering more liberal pretrial
125 release;

126 b. ending the use of racially biased risk assessment tools used to determine eligibility for
127 pretrial release;

128 c. diversion programs for drug offenses;

129 d. commonsense sentencing reform that relies less on policies such as minimum sentences
130 and “three-strike” rules;

131 e. significantly restricting no-knock warrants to cases where there is evidence that an
132 announcement by law enforcement would pose a danger to human life;

133 f. ending the practice of arresting children for behavior that ought to be handled in the
134 principal’s office. Instead, every school should have sufficient funding to employ guidance
135 counselors, social workers, or school psychologists to help guarantee age appropriate student
136 disciplinary practices. Security personnel at schools must focus on nonviolent resolution of
137 conflicts with a minimal use of force; and

138 g. supporting changes so people are not incarcerated for failure to pay fines or fees or have
139 their driver’s license suspended for any reason unrelated to public safety, such as inability to
140 pay fines or fees or child support; and

141 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:**

142 AFSCME reasserts the right of all law enforcement officers to collective bargaining, due
143 process and participation in our union. AFSCME stands in support of all workers, including law
144 enforcement officers facing civil suit and potential liability for on the job conduct, being indemnified
145 for legal fees and civil judgments.

SUBMITTED BY: INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD