

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order on Safe Policing for Safe Communities
June 16, 2020

The President. Thank you very much. Please. And thank you all for being here as we take historic action to deliver a future of safety and security for Americans of every race, religion, color, and creed.

We're joined today by law enforcement professionals and community leaders. Though we may all come from different places and different backgrounds, we're united by our desire to ensure peace and dignity and equality for all Americans.

I have just concluded a meeting with incredible families—just incredible families—that have been through so much. The families of Ahmaud Arbery, Botham Jean, Antwon Rose, Jemel Roberson, Atatiana Jefferson, Michael Dean, Darius Tarver, Cameron Lamb, and Everett Palmer. These are incredible people. Incredible people. And it's so sad.

Many of these families lost their loved ones in deadly interactions with police. To all of the hurting families, I want you to know that all Americans mourn by your side. Your loved ones will not have died in vain. We are one Nation. We grieve together, and we heal together. I can never imagine your pain or the depth of your anguish, but I can promise to fight for justice for all of our people. And I gave a commitment to all of those families today, with Senator Tim Scott and Attorney General Bill Barr: We are going to pursue what we said. We will be pursuing it, and we will be pursuing it strongly, Tim. Right? Okay?

I want to recognize Attorney General Bill Barr, who's spent so much time on this and others matters like this. Bill, thank you very much for being here. Along with—[*applause*]*—great job you're doing. Along with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and Tim Scott, and they're going to be working on a Senate bill also that can go hand in hand with this. And also, Representatives Kelly Armstrong, Louie Gohmert, Jim Jordan, Guy Reschenthaler, and Pete Stauber.*

And thanks also to Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody, the president of the Fraternal Order of Police, Pat Yoes, president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Steven Casstevens, and many other law enforcement leaders who are going to be joining me at the signing.

Today is about pursuing common sense and fighting for a cause like we seldom get the chance to fight for. We have to find common ground. But I strongly oppose the radical and dangerous efforts to defend [defund],* dismantle, and dissolve our police departments, especially now when we've achieved the lowest recorded crime rates in recent history.

Americans know the truth: Without police, there is chaos; without law, there is anarchy; and without safety, there is catastrophe. We need leaders at every level of government who have the moral clarity to state these obvious facts.

Americans believe we must support the brave men and women in blue who police our streets and keep us safe. Americans also believe we must improve accountability, increase transparency, and invest more resources in police training, recruiting, and community engagement. Reducing crime and raising standards are not opposite goals, they are not mutually exclusive; they work together. They all work together.

* White House correction.

That is why today I'm signing an Executive order encouraging police departments nationwide to adopt the highest professional standards to serve their communities. These standards will be as high and as strong as there is on Earth.

The vast majority of police officers are selfless and courageous public servants. They are great men and women. When others run away from danger, police run straight into harm's way, often putting their lives at stake to protect someone who they don't know or never even met. Great danger.

Police officers run straight toward this incredible harm. Take the World Trade Center: They ran straight into the Twin Towers of 9/11. Many of them never returned. Never returned. Vast numbers of New York's Finest never returned.

Last year, I presented the Medal of Valor to six heroic police officers who ended a murderous rampage so professionally in Dayton, Ohio. Hundreds of people would have been killed, surely, without them.

We ask our police to put on the uniform and risk their lives for us every day. The least we deserve and the least we can do—because they deserve it so much—they have to get our gratitude. And we have to give them great respect for what they do, for the job is one of the most dangerous jobs on Earth, one of the most difficult jobs on Earth.

Last year alone, 89 law enforcement officers were killed in the line of duty. In recent days, two members of law enforcement were killed amid riots and looting, and hundreds of police officers were injured just recently. One officer was shot in the head and is now laying in a hospital, almost totally paralyzed.

Despite our very good record on crime, law and order must be further restored nationwide, and your Federal Government is ready, willing, and able to help, as we did in Minneapolis. After it got out of control for 4 days, we sent in representatives, commonly known as the National Guard, and it was all put down very quickly. We're willing to help. We're willing to help in Seattle. We're willing to help anywhere you want, and we'll be there very quickly. It won't take long.

There will be no more looting or arson, and the penalty will be very grave for those who get caught. Violence and destruction will not be tolerated. We cannot do that. The looters have no cause that they're fighting for—just trouble.

Every day, police officers make great sacrifices to keep our communities secure and safe. In 2018, our police arrested nearly 12,000 people for murder, 25,000 people for rape, and nearly 1.5 million for assault. Very dangerous criminals.

In many cases, local law enforcement is underfunded, understaffed, and undersupported. Forty-seven percent of all murders in Chicago and sixty-eight percent of all murders in Baltimore went without arrests last year.

Americans want law and order. They demand law and order. They may not say it, they may not be talking about it, but that's what they want. Some of them don't even know that's what they want, but that's what they want. And they understand that when you remove the police, you hurt those who have the least, the most.

Nobody needs a strong, trustworthy police force more than those who live in distressed areas, and nobody is more opposed to the small number of bad police officers—and you have them. They're a very tiny—I use the word "tiny." It's a very small percentage, but you have them. But nobody wants to get rid of them more than the overwhelming number of really good and great police officers. Some of them are standing with me and with me in the audience today, and I appreciate your being here. *[Applause]* Thank you. Thank you. Great job.

What's needed now is not more stoking of fear and division. We need to bring law enforcement and communities closer together, not to drive them apart.

Under the Executive order I'm signing today, we will prioritize Federal grants from the Department of Justice to police departments that seek independent credentialing, certifying that they meet high standards and, in fact, in certain cases, the highest standard—that's where they do it the best—on the use of force and deescalation training.

For example, many believe that proper training might have prevented the tragic deaths of Antwon Rose and Botham Jean. As part of this new credentialing process, chokeholds will be banned, except if an officer's life is at risk. And I will say, we've dealt with all of the various departments, and everybody said: "It's time. We have to do it."

Additionally, we're looking at new advanced and powerful less-lethal weapons to help prevent deadly interactions. New devices are being developed all the time, and we're looking at the best of them. And cost is no object. No object.

Under this Executive order, departments will also need to share of information about credible abuses so that officers with significant issues do not simply move from one police department to the next. That's a problem. And the heads of our police departments said, "Whatever you can do about that, please let us know." We're letting you know. We're doing a lot about it.

In addition, my order will direct Federal funding to support officers in dealing with homeless individuals and those who have mental illness and substance-abuse problems. We will provide more resources for responders, such as social workers who can help officers manage these complex encounters. And this is what they've studied and worked on all their lives. They understand how to do it. We're going to get the best of them put in our police departments and working with our police. We will have reform without undermining our many great and extremely talented law enforcement officers.

President Obama and Vice President Biden never even tried to fix this during their 8-year period. The reason they didn't try is because they had no idea how to do it. And it is a complex situation.

Beyond the steps we're taking today, I am committed to working with Congress on additional measures. Congress has started already, and they'll be having bills coming out of the Senate and possibly out of the House. And hopefully, they'll all get together, and they'll come up with a solution that goes even beyond what we're signing today. But this is a big, big step, a step that hasn't been taken before.

But in order to make real progress on public safety, we have to break old patterns of failure. Many of the same politicians now presenting themselves as the solution are the same ones who have failed for decades on schools, jobs, justice, and crime. They're all often, unfortunately, the same politicians running the cities and States where help is most needed. It's an attitude, and it's not working.

Today's action is a big part of the solution to restoring, renewing, and rebuilding our communities. For the last 3½ years, my administration has been focused on creating opportunity, fighting for equal justice, and truly delivering results. Nobody has ever delivered results like we've delivered. Nobody has come close. And we worked with some great people. We've worked with fantastic people to get it done.

We enacted landmark criminal justice reform, something that nobody else could get done. They tried, and they couldn't even come close. And we got it done, and we got it done

powerfully, and people appreciated it. But it's something that with all the work and all the talk for so many years—criminal justice reform—nobody else could get done.

We secured permanent and record funding for HBCUs—that's Historically Black Colleges and Universities—numbers that they never thought were possible and long-term financing, because they would come back to the White House; after my third year, I said, "Why are you here again?" Great people. About 42 people, the heads of Black colleges and universities. Great people. They do such an incredible job.

And I'd see them, and after the third year I'd say, "Why are you doing this?" "We need money again." I said, "Don't we set it so you have, like, a 10-year program, a 5-year program?" "No, sir, for years and years, we've had to come back every single year." I said: "Well, the only bad thing about what I'm going to do is, I'm going to give you long-term financing, and I'm going to up the amount, but I won't get to see you anymore. So that's the bad part. But you can focus on education now instead of worrying about dealing with us in Washington."

So we did that for the Historically Black Colleges and Universities. I'm very proud of it. They're incredible. They're incredible people. Got to know a lot of the heads of those colleges. They do an unbelievable job and don't get the kind of notoriety that they should have.

We expanded affordable options for better health care. We created Opportunity Zones with Senator Tim Scott; brought it to me. We didn't know if we could get it passed, Tim, right? But we got it passed, and I think it's probably one of the great things that we've done in this administration. Tens of thousands of jobs, billions and billions of dollars being brought into areas and neighborhoods that would never, ever, ever be taken care of, monetarily. Areas that didn't have 10 cents put them—in them for years and decades, and now people are investing, thriving, and the jobs have come back.

We achieved the lowest Black, Hispanic, and Asian unemployment rates in American history. And we will do it again. We'll do it again. We're fighting for school choice, which really is the civil rights of all time in this country. Frankly, school choice is the civil rights statement of the year, of the decade, and probably beyond, because all children have to have access to quality education. A child's ZIP Code in America should never determine their future, and that's what was happening. So we're very, very strong on school choice, and I hope everybody remembers that. And it's happening. It's already happened, but it's happening. We have tremendous opposition from people that know they shouldn't be opposing it. School choice.

All children deserve equal opportunity because we are all made equal by God. So true. A great jobs market and thriving economy is probably the best thing that we can do to help the Black, Hispanic, Asian communities. We saw that just recently, prior to the virus that came in from China just a few months ago. What a horrible thing it was all over the world, 188 countries now.

And I just want to say, we've done incredibly well. We're doing well. Things are happening that nobody can even believe. Our country is opening up. And it's opening up rapidly. We had the best unemployment and employment. We had best unemployment and employment numbers—think of that—in the history of our country. We're up to almost 160 million people working. There was never anything even close. And that's for almost every group including Black, Hispanic, Asian, women, young people, old people, young people without a high school diploma. Every group. Everybody was thrilled. Everybody had—just about—high-paying jobs.

Our country was never in a better position, and we were planning on massive growth—it was happening; it was already there—including big salary increases, which were already taking place for the last 2½ years. Big, big increases. Record increases. Nobody has seen anything like it. And then, we got hit by the virus, along with the rest of the world. And now I'm building it up

again. Here we go again. But I'm building it up again, and it's moving fast. And it will be even better than before, because we also learned. It will be better than before.

Jobs are rapidly coming back, and retail sales that were just announced 2 hours ago—just a little while ago—they're up a staggering 17.7 percent. Amazing. The projection was anywhere from 6 to 8 percent. We're up 17.7 percent. And what does that mean? The stock market went through the roof.

These good numbers, they drove it up to a level that—we're almost at the same level. Hard to believe. We're getting very close to the level we were before the pandemic and before all of the things that you've seen happen happened. That's a great thing, because ultimately, it's about jobs, it's about—the Government can never do anything like a great job for a person, where they look forward to getting up in the morning and going to work and getting a much bigger check than they could ever get otherwise.

Today, and over the last 60 days, we've had one of the biggest stock market increases in the history of the stock markets. And 2 weeks ago, the 50-day increase was the single biggest.

Unless my formula is tampered with, we will soon be in a stronger position than we were before the plague came in from China. When the numbers reached the point that I know they will, there will again be a great unity and a great spirit in our country. People will have that job back that they might have lost. They'll be making even more money than they did before.

We have some brilliant people working with me, and we put it together. We did it once, and we're very easily doing it again. We're way ahead of schedule. You'll see that. You'll see the third quarter numbers will be very good. You'll see fourth quarter will be really good. And you'll see next year will be one of the best economic years this country has ever had.

And it's all happening very quickly, way ahead of schedule, and I think you see that. People can't even believe what they're looking at.

But on top of all of that, before the end of the year, I predict we will have a very successful vaccine, therapeutic, and cure. We're making tremendous progress. I deal with these incredible scientists, doctors, very, very closely. I have great respect for their minds. And they have come up with things, and they've come up with many other cures and therapeutics over the years. These are the people: the best, the smartest, the most brilliant anywhere.

And they've come up with the AIDS vaccine. They've come up with—or the AIDS. And they—as you know, there's various things, and now various companies are involved. But the therapeutic for AIDS, AIDS was a death sentence, and now people live a life with a pill. It's an incredible thing.

The Ebola vaccine and others, these are the people that have done it, or these are the people that have been around it, and they're all competing. It's an incredible thing. All of these brilliant firms, labs, companies are competing. And I will tell you, we're very far advanced. We've already started tests and trials.

So I think we're going to have a very, very good answer to that very, very soon. I always say, even without it, it goes away. But if we had the vaccine—and we will—if we had therapeutic, or cure—one thing sort of blends into the other—it will be a fantastic day. And I think that's going to happen, and it's going to happen very soon.

Americans can achieve anything when we work together as one national family. To go forward, we must seek cooperation, not confrontation; we must build upon our heritage, not tear it down; and we must cherish the principles of America's founding as we strive to deliver safe, beautiful, elegant justice and liberty for all.

I'd like now to invite our great friends—because they are—our great friends from law enforcement, the offices representing their groups, to come up as I sign a very important Executive order. And we're asking Mitch and Tim and all of the people that are here from Congress to go back and see if they can get something done. I see Louie and Jim—Jim Jordan—who are all here, a lot of our representatives from Congress and the Senate.

If they can go back and add to what we're signing today, it will be a big moment. It will be a big moment. But this is a tremendous step. This a step that could have been taken years ago but people chose not to do that. And that was, in my opinion, a big mistake. We could've solved a lot of the problems that we have now.

So if I could—law enforcement, if you could come forward. We've had the—please, come up. We've had the endorsement of the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the Fraternal Order of Police, International Association of Chiefs of Police, International Union of Police Associations, Major County Sheriffs of America Association, National Association of Police Organizations, National District Attorneys Association, National Sheriffs Association, Sergeants Benevolent Association, and many others.

They've worked on this with me and my team and have been fantastic. I want to thank my team. What a team it is. And we've taken very much into mind what they are saying, because these are the people that keep us safe, and they've done an incredible job.

Thank you all very much. Thank you.

[At this point, the President signed the Executive order.]

Livingston County, IL, Sheriff Tony Childress. Thank you, Mr. President. Great job.

The President. Thank you very much, fellas. Take one of these for yourselves.

[The President distributed pens to attendees.]

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:16 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to retired St. Louis Police Department Capt. David Dorn, who was killed in St. Louis, MO, on June 2; Federal Protective Service Ofc. Dave P. Underwood, who was killed in Oakland, CA, on May 30; and Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Ofc. Shay Mikalonis, who was shot in Las Vegas, NV, on June 1.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Safe policing for safe communities, signing the Executive order.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Armstrong, Kelly A.; Barr, William P.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Casstevens, Steven R.; Childress, Tony; Dorn, David; Gohmert, Louis B., Jr.; Jordan, James D.; McConnell, A. Mitchell; Mikalonis, Shay; Obama, Barack; Reschenthaler, Guy L.; Scott, Timothy E.; Stauber, Peter A.; Underwood, Dave P.; Yoes, Patrick.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : National Guard; Business and industry : Domestic investment, promotion efforts; California : Civil unrest and violence in Oakland; China : Coronavirus outbreak; Civil rights : Freedom of religion; Civil rights : Minorities :: Relations with police; Civil rights : Racial equality; Congress : Bipartisanship; Congress : Senate :: Majority leader; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Economy, national : Household income and wages; Economy, national : Improvement; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Federal assistance; Education : Postsecondary education :: Historically

Black Colleges and Universities; Education : School choice and voucher programs; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Unemployment rate; Health and medical care : Affordability and costs; Health and medical care : Research and development; HIV/AIDS : Domestic prevention and treatment strategy; Justice, Department of : Attorney General; Law enforcement and crime : Community-oriented policing, strengthening efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Fraternal Order of Police; Law enforcement and crime : International Association of Chiefs of Police; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement officers, service and dedication; Law enforcement and crime : Nationwide civil unrest and violence; Law enforcement and crime : Policing best practices, improvement efforts; Law enforcement and crime : State and community law enforcement agencies, Federal support; Law enforcement and crime : Use-of-force policies, improvement efforts ; Minnesota : Minneapolis :: Civil unrest and violence; Missouri : Civil unrest and violence in St. Louis; Nevada : Civil unrest and violence in Las Vegas; Ohio : 2019 shooting in Dayton; Terrorism : September 11, 2001, attacks.

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