

# 'DEFUND THE POLICE' CONTINUES TO HAUNT DEMOCRATS

Carl Golden, March 8, 2023



“Defund the police” – the rallying cry of the Democratic Party’s progressive left wing in the aftermath of George Floyd’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police nearly three years ago – was arguably the most self-defeating political slogan in modern history.

Its impact and potential for inflicting even greater damage reached into the White House itself. President Joe Biden has backed a Republican-led congressional resolution to overturn a criminal justice reform ordinance adopted by the District of Columbia city council to abolish some mandatory minimum sentences and substantially reduce penalties for a variety of crimes.

While Biden’s intention to sign the Republican legislation infuriated Democratic House members, it was, in truth, an easy political call, an effort to shed the de-fund the police reputation and wriggle out from under its burden.

The president was in a position to blunt the Republican strategy of portraying Democrats as soft on crime with its support of policies to hamstringing law enforcement agencies while offering excuses for criminals.

With the White House and control of Congress at stake in 20 months, Biden and his circle of advisers understood that Republicans had gained significant traction with its hard line on crime strategy and an opportunity to stake out a pro law enforcement position was at his hand. No matter the internal strife it would cause in the party, it would have been a serious error to pass it up.

The president was accused of reneging on his long held belief that the District of Columbia deserved a full measure of home rule and its own decisions without interference or approval from Congress – a step toward eventual statehood.

As competing political issues – an esoteric policy wonk debate over home rule versus rampant violent crime – it is no contest. No matter the desirability of home rule or future statehood status, on the list of priorities of the nation’s voters, they don’t make the cut.

Homicides, assaults, robberies, carjackings, blatant daytime shoplifting sprees, and a sense that the citizens of cities walk the streets at their own peril are top of mind issues.

Voters are besieged daily by news accounts of corporate decision makers opting to move their headquarters out of cities like Chicago, San Francisco, New York, Seattle, Atlanta and Portland, Oregon, among others, because they can no longer guarantee the safety and security of their employees.

Photos and footage of deserted or boarded up stores, tent cities and homeless encampments that too often become tragic crime scenes depict neighborhoods in decline.

The owners of small corner business establishments and pharmacies are in the heretofore unimaginable position of placing items such as toothpaste, household detergents and cleansers under lock and key to thwart out of control shoplifting.

In store video cameras capture individuals pushing shopping carts loaded with merchandise – even large screen television – out of stores without hindrance.

It amounts to an enormous stockpile of words and pictures that Republican campaign strategists and consultants will sort through and flood the media with ads accusing Democrats of opening the doors to lawlessness on a grand scale while ignoring the dystopia their policies have created.

Many of the 173 House Democrats who voted to uphold the ordinance blistered Biden for placing them in jeopardy, subjecting them to Republican attacks for supporting a proposal that even their president found so egregious that he blocked its implementation.

They complained bitterly they had received no advance warning of the president’s intention and blamed his staff for hanging them out to dry and creating serious trust issues going forward.

Democratic leadership allowed the “defund the police” message to resonate and embed itself as a component in the party’s agenda, even though some – including Biden — sought to distance themselves from it.

For a movement that sprang three years ago from tragedy and controversy and never attained majority support in the country, defund the police continues to haunt.

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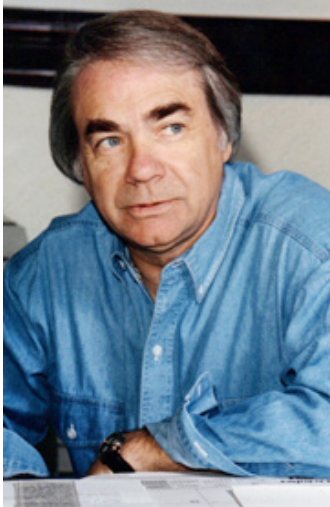
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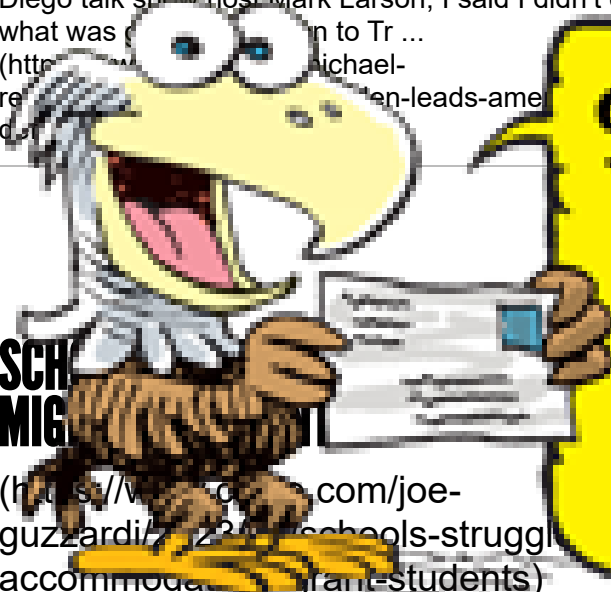
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