

**INVEST IN PUBLIC SERVICES, ADDRESS COMMUNITY NEEDS WITHOUT POLICING****1 WHEREAS:**

2 American police forces killed three people per day in 2019, for a total of nearly 1,100, leading  
3 to a public health crisis in police violence according to the American Public Health Association; and

**4 WHEREAS:**

5 Police killings impact all Americans, but most greatly impact Black Americans, who are killed  
6 at almost three times the rate of white Americans. In some areas of the country, Black Americans are  
7 killed at six times the rate; and

**8 WHEREAS:**

9 The institution of policing in America has its origins directly in slavery, and the slave patrols  
10 and night watches which later became modern day police departments, which were designed to  
11 control minorities and maintain the economic order, to assist wealthy landowners in recovering and  
12 punishing enslaved people, who were considered property. Those police departments did act as  
13 agents of state repression against workers, labor unions and the fundamental American right to  
14 organize and strike; and

**15 WHEREAS:**

16 The impact of police violence on Black Americans is a concern to all Americans. Black  
17 Americans are our union brothers and sisters, family, colleagues, patients, clients and friends; and

**18 WHEREAS:**

19 Since the 1980s, public funding and investment has prioritized policing at the expense of  
20 education, housing and all other social supports. The result of this organized abandonment of the  
21 public sector, is that major cities such as Los Angeles, Orlando, Minneapolis, Houston and Chicago  
22 spend as much as 30% of their budget on policing, leaving fewer resources for public needs. As cities  
23 face steep budget gaps due to COVID-19, mayors cut public services but not policing. In fact,  
24 policing continues to expand into, and act in place of, community institutions such as education and  
25 schools, housing and homelessness prevention, mental health services and youth services, requiring  
26 police officers to act as first responders, social and welfare agency workers, etc., when they have little  
27 training for those roles; and

Committee  
Assignment \_\_\_\_\_

Committee  
Recommendation \_\_\_\_\_

Convention  
Action \_\_\_\_\_

28 **WHEREAS:**

29 The safest communities are the ones with the most resources, not the communities with the  
30 most police. Now is the time to reinvest in American communities and fund the services that prevent  
31 and respond to harm: mediation and intervention teams, community safety and restorative justice  
32 councils, the decriminalization of nonviolent offenses in favor of social supports, and meaningful  
33 mental health care; and

34 **WHEREAS:**

35 We must invest in community solutions in order to decrease the reliance on policing and  
36 incarceration as a strategy for keeping our communities safe. This includes decriminalizing police  
37 interactions with the public and reducing the need for incarceration, where COVID-19 infection is on  
38 the rise, through investment in social services and economic opportunity; and

39 **WHEREAS:**

40 As a union we lead, and must continue to lead, efforts to restore safety to all Americans and  
41 end racial discrimination. The voice of the American people is now heard across the nation, in  
42 protests from Minneapolis to Atlanta to St. Louis, in over 1,700 towns and cities, calling for a shift  
43 in public funding away from policing; and

44 **WHEREAS:**

45 Increased use of military grade weaponry by local police departments leads to significantly  
46 more civilian deaths. Restricting the use and purchase of military weapons will save lives; and

47 **WHEREAS:**

48 Despite the large number of police killings annually, police are almost never charged for  
49 excessive force violations. Between 2013 and 2019, 99% of killings resulted in no charges; and

50 **WHEREAS:**

51 There is increasing recognition that lethal force, even when ruled “justifiable” from a legal  
52 perspective, is preventable, and most of the situations where police killed Americans, there were  
53 opportunities for de-escalation and crisis support; and

54 **WHEREAS:**

55 Police officers, and all workers who work in police departments around the country, are  
56 American workers who deserve a just transition to new roles in our communities. Many who work  
57 in policing chose to enter the policing workforce because of the benefits of a union: representation,  
58 healthcare and a secure retirement. We respect their commitment to public service, and believe these  
59 American workers can join the work of rebuilding our public sector with expanded services that

60 prioritize human needs, and benefit all members of our communities, excluding no one on the basis  
61 of race; and

62 **WHEREAS:**

63 The AFSCME Executive Board passed Resolution Number 51, “Racial Justice and Public  
64 Safety” at the 2016 International Union Convention, stating “We join the nation in concern about the  
65 number of police shootings and the mass incarceration of the black community... Our vision for racial  
66 and economic justice means...Our criminal justice system treats everyone equitably and fairly, and  
67 communities of color are no longer disproportionately arrested, tried and sentenced; and Our  
68 communities are safe, with robust public services to address the needs of residents, including mental  
69 health services.” Yet, the recommendations on community policing and police accountability in this  
70 resolution have not led to a decrease in police killings, but death by policing has only increased in  
71 suburban and rural areas since 2016.

72 **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:**

73 AFSCME will work at the local, state and national level to support policies and programs that  
74 prioritize a well-funded public sector response to human needs and to address harm; and

75 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

76 AFSCME will support efforts to move funding away from policing and incarceration towards  
77 expanded public services, rebalancing state and local budgets to serve American communities and to  
78 end police violence; and

79 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:**

80 AFSCME will support efforts to demilitarize the police, including the call to end the federal  
81 government’s 1033 Program providing military weaponry to local police departments; and

82 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED:**

83 AFSCME will support workers to transition from jobs in policing into public service  
84 professions with strong union contracts, benefits and retirement.

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