

Joe Biden Funds The Police

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President Joe Biden's signature legislation has spent billions helping cities and states hire police officers, and the White House would really, really like you to know about it.

"The answer is not to defund the police, the answer is to fund the police with the resources and training they need to protect our communities," Biden said at the start of a Rose Garden event on Friday afternoon.

White House officials say at least \$10 billion from the American Rescue Plan has gone towards public safety, which includes hiring police officers, cash to clear court backlogs, upgraded body cameras and police cars and funding for mental health and community violence intervention programs.

And Biden wants states and cities to double down. "To every governor, every mayor, every county official: The need is clear," Biden said. "My message is clear. Spend this money now. Use these funds we made available to prioritize public safety."

Biden delivered his message while flanked by police officers and local leaders. It was the administration's third time informing the public about the money, following a conference call with reporters on Thursday night and the appearance of Kansas City, Missouri, Mayor Quentin Lucas and Detroit Police Chief James White at Friday's press briefing.

In Kansas City, Lucas hired 150 additional police officers with federal dollars. In Detroit, they used the cash to deploy gunshot detection technology, body cameras and additional police patrols.

The intensity with which Biden's White House delivered the message highlights how central crime concerns remain to American voters, and how Democrats — up to and including Biden — still believe they need to fight off GOP attacks about “defunding the police.”

A Pew Research Center report earlier this week found Americans considered “violent crime” and “gun violence” to be the third- and fourth-most serious issues facing the country, following only inflation and the affordability of health care. A whopping 88% of American adults said violent crime was a very big or moderately big problem in the country, while 76% said the same of gun violence.

The Centers for Disease Control this week said gun homicide levels reached their highest point in 25 years in 2020.

Biden's call for increased public safety funding came as the Treasury Department prepared to release a second batch of funds from the American Rescue Plan to states and cities around the country.

Democrats have made clear they hope to use the GOP's unified opposition to the \$2.1 trillion American Rescue Plan to flip the script and attack Republicans for voting against police funding.