

Opinion: Republicans have a new strategy: Blue Lies Matter

 [washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/29/even-squad-is-more-pro-police-than-these-republicans](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/29/even-squad-is-more-pro-police-than-these-republicans)

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Rep. Elise Stefanik (N.Y.), who with McCarthy's help ousted Rep. Liz Cheney (Wyo.) as Republican Conference chair, falsely tweeted Monday: "Dems' manta [sic] 'Defund the Police' was one of their top policy messaging points in 2020.... GOP has always supported increasing funding for police!" 

The rank and file have followed their leaders down Mendacity Lane. Rep. Jim Banks (Ind.) said on "Fox News Sunday" that "Joe Biden is being held hostage in the White House by the Squad and the radicals in the Democrat [sic] Party who control their party, who have spent the last year stigmatizing one of the most honorable professions in America, in our law enforcement."

By midday Tuesday, a dozen House Republicans had tweeted messages about Democrats defunding the police.

How, then, to explain the latest "legislative scorecard" from the National Association of Police Officers, a group claiming to represent a quarter-million officers who endorsed President Donald Trump's reelection?

McCarthy, Stefanik and Banks all scored 57 percent, and some of the back-benchers piling on Tuesday — Reps. Ken Buck (Colo.), Jody Hice (Ga.), Mo Brooks (Ala.) — scored a paltry 43 percent on NAPO's pro-police scorecard.

And the Squad? Democratic Reps. Ilhan Omar (Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (Mich.) and Ayanna Pressley (Mass.) all scored 86 percent. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) scored 71 percent. Where it really counts, all four members of the Squad are more pro-police than their Republican critics.

The pattern continues when looking at House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California (80 percent) and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer of Maryland (86 percent), compared with Minority Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana (50 percent). Rep. Thomas Massie (Ky.), one of 21 House Republicans to vote against giving medals to the police heroes of Jan. 6, scored 33 percent.

Things are a bit more even in the Senate, although Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont (80 percent) bests Republican Sens. Tim Scott of South Carolina and Ted Cruz of Texas (both 60 percent) and Rand Paul of Kentucky (a perfect zero).

The reason is simple. Democrats, at least at the federal level, have been the ones *funding* the police. The 2019-2021 scorecard is based on votes on health care, pensions, covid-19 relief, bulletproof vests, victim compensation and policing reform. There's not yet a scorecard of votes in the new Congress, but police groups avored the American Rescue Plan covid-relief legislation, which Republicans uniformly opposed, and President Biden wants to pump \$300 million more into the COPS community policing program, which Republicans have long opposed.

Few Democratic voters support defunding the police. Seventy-two percent of likely Democratic voters in New York City's mayoral primary agreed that there should be *more* police officers on the street, an online poll last month by NY1 with Ipsos found. Only 20 percent disagreed.

Biden himself rejected "defund" calls during the presidential campaign. Arguing for the \$350 billion in aid to states and municipalities contained in the covid relief legislation this year, he warned on at least three occasions that such funds were needed because police officers were at risk of losing their jobs.

Contrast that with McCarthy, who, well before opposing this year's relief bill, voted against funding for the COPS program in 2015, 2014, 2012, 2011 (twice) and 2009.

Or contrast it with Banks, who was challenged on "Fox News Sunday" by host Chris Wallace: "You voted against that package, against that \$350 billion, just like every other Republican in the House and Senate. So can't you make the argument that it's you and the Republicans who are defunding the police?" Banks tried to change the subject.

Or contrast it with Stefanik, who opposed the legislation that is now funding cops in her district. The Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times reports that the city is using funds from the American Rescue Plan to reinstate four police positions that had been cut because of a budget squeeze.

Certainly, there has been a serious spike in violent crime over the past year. Undoubtedly, the justified demands from the left for policing reform, and the popular backlash since the murder of George Floyd, have taken a toll on police morale. But for every Tlaib rashly demanding "no more policing," there's a Rep. Andrew Clyde (R-Ga.) refusing to shake hands with the Jan. 6 police hero who was beaten unconscious and suffered a concussion and heart attack.

Democrats ought to be saying, as Biden aide Cedric Richmond did on "Fox News Sunday," "Republicans are very good at staying on talking points of who says defund the police, but the truth is, they defunded the police." Unlike GOP leadership, the numbers don't lie.