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June 24, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President Trump, Attorney General Barr, Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy, and Schumer:

The American people are yearning for safety, stability, and security during these difficult times. Our nation is being torn between those who respect the rule of law and those who rationalize the lawless, tragic burning of our communities while rallying behind the “defund the police” movement. We must defeat the notion that defunding the police will make America safer and focus on what we can do to rebuild trust between law enforcement and our communities.

As chief legal officers of our states, we have a responsibility to ensure that our communities are the safest places to live, work, and raise a family. We also recognize, however, that every state and community is different. Some city officials seek to exist without law enforcement. Officials in cities like Seattle wish to allow autonomous, police-free zones, while those in Philadelphia and Raleigh choose to dole out licenses to loot through public proclamations declaring officers will not make arrests for property theft. We know this approach is wrong and will most certainly lead to increasing crime rates and an erosion in public safety and trust.

Elected officials who say “defund” doesn’t mean “defund” choose to ignore the consequences of their statements and the public safety risk posed to their communities. To “defund the police” would mean to turn our backs on victims of domestic violence, children being bought and sold for sex, or the elderly being physically and emotionally abused. Creative parsing of the word “defund” is at best an attempt to pacify the loud, lawless few, and at worst, an attempt to vilify a noble profession.

It is also tragic to see so many elected officials cave to the political agenda of certain radical groups within our cities, letting chaos and disorder reign supreme, while putting the safety of so many at risk. Americans deserve better than this kind of capitulation. They deserve to have their lives and property protected by the law.

The vast majority of law enforcement officers are underpaid and overworked public servants who adhere to the notion that “with great power comes great responsibility.” Defunding the police will not protect one single American, but will undoubtedly lead to reduced community safety.

This misperception is dramatically dispelled by the results of the City of Chicago’s consent decree with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 2015. The Obama Administration’s stringent settlement kept law enforcement officers from engaging with the community as a lawful method of policing. As a result, hardworking police officers were disrespected and demeaned by the community while arrests declined and crime skyrocketed. In 2016, a year after the consent decree went into effect, Chicago saw the largest year increase in the murder rate in the last 60 years, and two weeks ago, Chicago saw its single deadliest weekend in more than 60 years – 85 people were shot, 24 fatally.

James Madison, in Federalist No. 45, warned of the dangers of a federal government overtaking state sovereignty. In fact, the impetus for the 10th Amendment was the passionate pursuit of striking a balance between federal and state power. As defenders of the Constitution and believers in the rule of law, we certainly believe in the states’ abilities to be laboratories of democracy. It is up to each individual state and its citizens as to how they police themselves. The Minneapolis City Council, the New York and Los Angeles Mayors, and countless other communities who committed to defunding or dismantling their police departments may have the right to make that decision, even if it results in lawlessness and anarchy. We, the undersigned Attorneys General, on the other hand, support well-trained and well-funded law enforcement agencies that will keep our families, states, and nation safe.

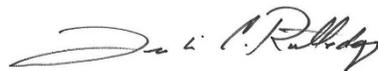
The law enforcement profession continues to evolve as the men and women on the frontlines regularly receive advanced certifications and degrees, use new equipment and technology, and engage in regular trainings. We know this because many of our states oversee law enforcement training and enforce these high standards statewide. Many law enforcement agencies have taken great strides to diversify their forces, institute policies that build trust and encourage problem solving.

Our goal should be to empower law enforcement to legally and ethically fulfill their duties, not restrict their ability to protect us all. We need to give law enforcement the tools and support they need to help people, not take them away. Ultimately, providing support for police and restoring trust between law enforcement and our communities will make all Americans safer.

Sincerely,



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Georgia Attorney General



Leslie Rutledge
Arkansas Attorney General



Ashley Moody
Florida Attorney General



Curtis T. Hill, Jr.
Indiana Attorney General



Derek Schmidt
Kansas Attorney General



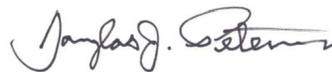
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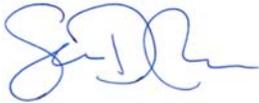
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