

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT, APRIL 2018

As I speak to many of our members, members of the community, other law enforcement groups, and government officials – the conversation always gravitates to how are we doing recruiting? My short answer to them, “It’s tough.”

As professionals in this career, we must figure out a new way to hire people. We not only have to seek out those who want to get into this profession, but those who want to work at our department.

Fresno City College Police Academy runs five classes per year to try and give the cadets to the different agencies in need of cops. These agencies range from Northern, Central and Southern California. Each class may start out with 50 cadets and finish with 40 and sometimes below that number.

Most of us can attest to, this is not a college graduate with a business degree and can go into the job market to find a good fit. Being a police officer/deputy sheriff is a specialized profession that is highly criticized and has a death benefit attached to it – because let’s face it the risk is proven high.

I found a great article by Leonard Sipes who has thirty-five years of speaking for national and state criminal justice agencies. Sipes has been interviewed multiple times by every national news outlet. Former Senior Specialist for Crime Prevention for the Department of Justice’s clearinghouse. He is the former Director of Information Services, National Crime Prevention Council. Sipes holds a Post-Masters’ Certificate of Advanced Study-Johns Hopkins University.

What happens when we run out of cops is a question worth asking.

We’re not just discussing economics; we are addressing your family’s safety. There is recent data stating that crime is the most important topic for Americans, Crime in America, with 78 percent expressing concern. If Americans are consistently being told that people do not want to become police officers, or that cops are leaving, that percentage will climb. People understand that officers are their first line of defense.

Police recruitment and retention may be one of the most important problems facing the country.

Use of Force

Several lawmakers and the family of a 22-year-old unarmed black man who was fatally shot by police proposed that California become the first state to significantly restrict when officers can open fire.

The legislation would change the standard from using “reasonable force” to “necessary force.”

That means officers would be allowed to shoot only if “there were no other reasonable alternatives to the use of deadly force” to prevent imminent serious injury or death, said an advocate for the American Civil Liberties Union.

Tinkering with legal protections for police could make it more difficult to hire officers and be dangerous because they may hesitate when confronting an armed suspect, threatening themselves and bystanders, a police spokesperson said, ABC News.

The History

We are all aware of the problems between cops and the communities they serve. We are all cognizant of the riots and protests in Baltimore and Ferguson and beyond. There is no group more concerned than police officers.

An estimated 40 million U.S. residents age 16 or older, or about 17 percent of the population, had a face-to-face contact with a police officer in one year. Among people who had face-to-face contact, about nine out of 10 residents felt the police were respectful or acted properly, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Having said this, it’s inevitable that out of 40 million yearly encounters, some will go bad. It’s a statistical reality.

When I was a cop, I almost shot a motorist one evening who was acting suspiciously. A gun appeared when he was reaching for his vehicle registration in his glove box. I pulled my firearm; I told him to freeze. He was startled by my announcement and his right hand moved in the direction of the gun. I felt the pressure of my trigger finger as I yelled for him to stop.

It was a starter pistol filled with blanks. I came close to killing a man. I would have been exonerated, but I would have had to live the rest of my life with the knowledge that I

took someone's life. Encounters like this are part of the day to day reality of police officers.

Ideological Lines

It's abundantly apparent that many have drawn their ideological lines about cops and mistrust (dislike?) their opposition.

Many believe that officers have abused and disrespected the citizens they are supposed to serve. Officers are portrayed as thugs, racists, and other despicable terms by major media sources.

But when we examine the circumstances of riots in Ferguson and Baltimore, the media and critical narrative was almost completely wrong.

Of the six police officers charged with criminal violations and murder regarding the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, none were convicted and most survived administrative charges by the city police department. None were dismissed. The incident was examined from every possible angle by critics throughout the country yet all officers were completely exonerated.

It was the same for Ferguson and the narrative of, "hands up, don't shoot." What propelled the nation into a frenzy of anti-cop sentiment turned out to be complete fiction.

Knowing this, why would anyone want to be a cop? Why would existing police officers stay on the job?

That's not to suggest that there are not examples of police brutality and unjustifiable homicides; there are.

Recent controversies propelled police officers to one of the lowest points in Gallups surveys before bouncing back to one of America's most trusted professions the year after, Crime in America-Public Opinion.

But regardless as to how some feel about police officers, one thing is clear; homicides and violent crime increased in *most* American cities in recent years. Baltimore, Chicago, and in cities throughout the country are profoundly affected.

Proactive Policing

People in high crime communities complain that police are overzealous regarding incessant stops. But proactive policing was debated and thoroughly examined by everyone including the media over the course of decades.

It's not as if cops decided to do this on their own. Why would they? Every stop means greater danger and unwanted public entanglements. Why would anyone risk their lives or sanity needlessly?

Officers were ordered to do this by affected communities, mayors, city councils, and governors. It wasn't a secret.

Vast crime reductions in New York City (referred to as the New York City miracle) and elsewhere were attributed to proactive law enforcement efforts. The media reported on the numbers of arrests and resulting jail overcrowding. Everyone knew what was going on and why.

"As the *Chicago Tribune* reported this morning, University of Utah Economics Professor Richard Fowles and I have just completed an important article on the 2016 Chicago homicide spike. Through multiple regression analysis and other tools, we conclude that an ACLU consent decree triggered a sharp reduction in stop and frisks by the Chicago Police Department, which in turn caused homicides to spike. Sadly, what Chicago police officers dubbed the "ACLU effect" was real—and more homicides and shootings were the consequence," Reason.Com.

I Could be Charged With Murder

Aggressive policing created community resentment. It had a role to play in disturbances.

But cops in Baltimore and throughout the nation said to themselves, "Wait a minute, those officers were just charged with murder for doing something I do every day. If they can do it to them, they can do it to me," Crime in America-Baltimore.

I believe that potential police recruits understand this and decline to pursue jobs in law enforcement. I believe that many existing officers are not being proactive or are looking for a way out.

The Increase in Violent Crime

Many of us from the former director of the FBI to data from Pew to research institutions to national law enforcement organizations believe that the vast increase in violent crime is because cops are holding back, they are not being proactive, Crime in America-Cops.

Some officers are so impacted by the criticism that they are sitting back and not taking aggressive actions. Yes, they are responding to calls for service. Yes, they are doing routine patrols. But many are doing little else.

Proactive policing (cops doing more to control crime) has the backing of research as to lowering violent crime, Crime in America-Proactive Policing.

If cops are not being proactive or aggressive enough, and if it's possible that this lack of action is contributing to increasing violent crime (homicides had the highest percentage increase since the 1960's), is it time to consider that our approach to law enforcement has been dysfunctional? Have cops lost faith in the system?

Per Pew, 72% say officers in their department are now less willing to stop and question suspicious persons. Overall, more than eight-in-ten (86%) say police work is harder today as a result of high-profile, negative incidents.

About nine-in-ten officers (93%) say their colleagues worry more about their personal safety – a level of concern recorded even before a total of eight officers died in separate ambush-style attacks in Dallas and Baton Rouge, Crime in America.

How Cops Feel

There are some in law enforcement who are convinced that there is a literal, “war on cops” based on the increasing number of officers murdered or assaulted, Cops Worry About Safety. Many believe that there's a culture war.

I'm aware of family members telling their loved ones to get out of policing and to get out now. They are also being told to stop being proactive as an act of self-preservation.

Many others are contemplating retirement, and jurisdictions are considering major pay subsidies to keep them on the job.

Those of us who have been police officers or existed in a law enforcement culture believe that the vast majority of cops are respectable, dedicated, even-tempered people who are just trying to do a demanding job with as little difficulty as possible.

The public is justifiably questioning the legitimacy of some police shootings and use of force. There ARE bad cops (the same as bad reporters, stockbrokers, and any other profession), and I dislike them intensely.

I believe that potential police recruits understand all of this. They talk to existing officers about their roles. Where I urged young people to enter law enforcement in the past, I'm suggesting that they use caution now.

I believe that every police family is having a conversation with their loved one's as to staying on a job where they are not supported or appreciated by the larger society, or segments of society.

NBC News

Numerous police departments around the country are desperately losing manpower with decreasing numbers of officers and recruits. Law enforcement is becoming less of a desirable career choice due to diminishing pay, high risk, and of course a recent bad rap — a trend that could put public safety at risk, say policing experts.

The current shortage afflicts police forces from large metropolitan hubs to rural towns.

“Departments are struggling to find not only interested, but interested and qualified, candidates to join the force,” said Jim Burch, vice president of the Police Foundation. “With everything happening around policing from salary to criticism, the question many people are asking is ‘is it worth it?’”

The Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the growth rate for “Police and Detectives” as “slower than average” at 4 percent with the average growth rate at 7 percent for other professions. The bottom tenth-percentile for an officer's salary is \$33,430, according to 2015 federal data.

“Forty-two percent of officers reported that ‘they nearly always or often have serious concerns about their safety,’” regardless of what level of danger an officer has come across in their career, according to the Pew Research Center.

USA Today

Police departments around the United States have reported shortages in the past five years — including major cities, such as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Los Angeles, Houston and Palo Alto, Calif. However, tracking national data on police officer recruitment is a challenge, said Jim Bueermann, president of the Police Foundation, a D.C.-based non-profit that seeks to support police forces nationwide through its research. To get 20 good applicants, it could take 200. Chief Jeff Hadley of Chatham County Police Department is trying to build his police department from scratch.

After sharing a force for more than 10 years, Georgia's Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department split back into two departments. Hadley's challenge has been finding recruits for patrol duty. Starting salary for a new recruit is roughly \$35,000.

In some cases, candidates aren't qualified due to past felony convictions or drug use. Some flunk polygraph tests. Others don't complete the lengthy background check.

The entire process can take three to six months, which weeds out people who need a job immediately, said Hadley, who also recruited officers when he was head of the public safety department in Kalamazoo, Mich.

In a 2017 Pew survey of nearly 8,000 officers, 86% said high-profile fatal incidents between black citizens and police officers have made their jobs more challenging, and 93% said the incidents have increased their concerns about their own safety.

My message to all of you – lets continuing working together with one another to find our replacements in this profession. Yes, things change over time and the job is different than it was 20/25 years ago. But nonetheless, we need great people to continue serving the public as all of you are doing. Stay safe.

Eric