NATIONAL POLICE SUPPORT FUND

2022
POLICE BALLOT MEASURES ANALYSIS

Summary

2021 was a relatively quiet year where ballot measures were concerned. Obscured behind a pandemic and generalized social upheaval, the year saw fewer ballot initiatives that affected Police Departments or other protective agencies that we've seen in the past.

The initiatives that did make it to the polls act as an X-ray on the public's perception of police, fire departments, emergency services, and correctional facilities. By examining these initiatives, the National Police Support Fund could identify a series of trends and public concerns that could shape public policy for years to come.

These bills were sponsored by activists from all sides of the political spectrum. As a result, many argued opposing points of view, highlighting different issues needing improvement. Yet, many of these concerns did not resonate as widely with regular voters as expected. For their sponsors, this may entail a warning for future political campaigns, even those with a broader scope. On the flip side, approved initiatives can teach strategists how to motivate the electorate, grab its attention, and mobilize it.

Important Data

Throughout 2021, 24 local ballot initiatives across the country dealt directly with Policing and Law Enforcement. These came from 10 different States and can be classified into five different categories:

- Budgetary concerns
- Collective bargaining
- Police oversight
- Procedural standards and limitations
- Defunding initiatives

Furthermore, 15 of these ballots were directly aimed at Police Departments, their training facilities, or the Sheriff Departments that run them. In six cases, Police Services share an administration with Fire Services, Emergency Responders, and other Rescue units. In addition, five initiatives targeted their jurisdiction's Emergency Services directly but would still indirectly impact the Police Departments attached to them.

Three ballots presented in Austin (TX), Denver (CO), and Cleveland (OH) dealt directly with the local Monitoring or Oversight office, not directly with police officers. Finally, in Allegheny (Pennsylvania), the initiative's nominal target was the county jail. This initiative was approved and is expected to impact police activities and standards during the next term.

Two-thirds of these initiatives (66% or 16 measures) were approved either by each State's Legislative Chamber or directly by the public.

What was voted on?

The most common topic addressed in the examined initiatives was, by far, budgetary increases or reallocations. In total, 15 ballots sought to increase the money available for police services.

One initiative sought to issue bonds to renovate the area's police facilities and equipment. The other 14 proposed new taxes to increase available funds. Except for two, almost all initiatives in this category sought some form of a parcel tax.

In the next category, we have three ballots addressing police equipment and procedures. In Allegheny (PA), the use of solitary confinement in the local county jail was banned. Another bill from Washington State banned the city's Police Department from acquiring Facial Recognition software or using data acquired through Facial Recognition technology. The third ballot (from Pittsburgh, PA) established a ban on no-knock warrants and police searches. All three of these initiatives passed.

Finally, one ballot in San Antonio (TX) sought to repeal the city's right to enter into collective bargaining agreements with the local Police Union. This initiative was repealed, and the City of San Antonio can now continue negotiating wages, healthcare coverage, and annual leave directly with its Police Officers Association.

Where did people vote?

By far, the most active state this term was California. Thanks to the relative ease of their "legislative referrals," this term saw Californians receive 12 different consultations on police issues.

The second most prolific state was Texas, with three initiatives presented between 2020 and 2022. Two more were presented in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania (of which Pittsburgh is part).

In the following states, we examined only one ballot each:

- Alaska
- Arizona
- Colorado
- Illinois
- Minnesota
- Ohio
- Washington

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Examining Successes, Failures, and Implications

Across all these issues, voters mobilized consistently in favor of stricter accountability measures for law enforcement officers in general. Here, the most salient results were those banning "no-knock warrants" (which were involved in some highly-publicized incidents during 2021) and the use of facial recognition technology. The ban on the use of solitary confinement can be interpreted similarly.

However, despite the apparent drive to limit police power or regulate its tools, the public seems less eager to defund or replace police departments. Both reviewed ballot measures that sought to defund the police were repealed, despite having the support of high-profile Representatives.

When it comes to budgetary concerns, this term's legacy becomes harder to read. Five of 15 initiatives to increase police funding were rejected by voters. This includes a highly ambitious move in Austin, Texas, which sought to establish minimum police staffing levels in the city while simultaneously increasing minimum training requirements for police officers. This ballot would have cost between $54 million and $119 million per year and enjoyed the personal support of the State's Governor.

However, in keeping with our findings for the 2017-2019 period, the public remains conservative whenever prominent figures are quoted. On the other hand, ten initiatives that sought to increase police funding passed. These all required more modest increases in parcel taxes or municipal tax caps.

Scheduling Participative Democracy

As analyzed in **our 2019-2020 report**, the 2020 General election provided voters with an opportunity to address policing issues alongside broader changes. However, in 2021, additional elections were considerably harder to organize, and participation levels were lower.

Over half (15) of all examined ballots were voted on November 2nd, 2021, as part of the off-year State or Special elections. Seven more elections were held in May 2021, and the other two ballots were voted on between March and April.

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Methods and sources of data

To compile this report, data was gathered from news reports, searches, public measures, and online electoral public information portals such as Ballotpedia. All data was publicly accessible for free, although spread across several sources.

The information included summaries, results, and statistics from any ballot initiatives presented during the year at the local, county, city, or state level. We selected any bills pertaining to law enforcement, correctional systems, and emergency response.

Next, the information was classified and categorized by topic, location, result, and the mechanisms behind each electoral process. This included bills discussed in State Legislatures and Senates, referendums, and public consultations.

Conclusion

Hidden beneath simple approval numbers, the ballot measures presented between 2020 and 2022 tell us a lot about how voters want to be protected, who should be doing it, and the extent of economic impact they are willing to face.

This data analysis found four main trends:

- 66% of all measures (16 out of 24) were passed
- Over 50% of the approved ballot measures favored increasing the budget for police operations
- 100% of ballot measures that sought to regulate police powers were passed
- No measures meant to defund the police met with voters' approval.

Law enforcement continues to be an essential service across the country, and the public largely agrees and shows support. However, funding for large projects in rapidly-growing cities continues to be met with resistance. Police Departments need to communicate effectively with the people they serve: it's not just about where the money goes but also about ensuring it is spent visibly and that the average voter understands the rationale for any budgetary increases.

About

National Police Support Fund is a national political organization organized under **Section 527 of the IRS Tax Code.**

Our movement is comprised of Americans from all walks of life who are joined together by their common respect for the rule of law and united in their support for the police officers who uphold the law every day in their communities.

National Police Support Fund was founded as a response to the growth of a pervasive anti-police movement in the United States that has often been perpetuated by some politicians at the highest levels of our government. The result has been the rise of an increasingly violent anti-police movement which targets the men and women in uniform who daily, and often thanklessly put themselves in harm's way to protect the citizens of the communities they serve.

National Police Support Fund is committed to promoting the interests and well-being of American police officers within the public policy process through grassroots political action. This grassroots

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