



June 9, 2020

**Statement from NAGE National President David J. Holway**  
Defunding is not the answer, advocating for additional resources is.

The national call to defund the police is not the answer to society's ills. Personally, the thought of calling 911 and not having anyone pick up the phone is alarming. In 1985, I woke up at 4AM to a noise in my house. I encountered a young man wearing a ski mask who had broken in with the intent to rob me of whatever valuables he could find. I immediately called 911 and within 90 seconds, there was a police officer at my door. The officer's arrival was a relief to myself and my dad, who lived in an in-law apartment in my house.

I live in a neighborhood that is quite close-knit and that morning, I started an investigation of my own. I discovered that the B&E man was a neighbor who came from a wonderful family, they were friends of mine. This individual was suffering from an addiction that had consumed his life. The problem was, and still is, that society has not allocated the resources to fund programs that could have helped this young man overcome his demons. What was true 35 years ago is still true today; we have not adequately funded programs to combat substance abuse, mental illness and homelessness.

Now is the time to address these issues, but not by further vilifying those who have sworn to serve and protect. We must continue to support their efforts in keeping us safe while providing the mechanisms to address the problems that our society has failed to address for decades.

What does defunding truly mean?

In my hometown, there is a movement to cut \$4,000,000 from the police budget. Four million dollars equates to thirty police positions or, more specifically, eliminating six officers per shift. The question then becomes who, if anyone, will show up if you call 911? When will they show up? How are they to prioritize the calls that come in?

The thirty most recently hired officers would be shown the street. If the defunding spreads, who would sign up for arguably the hardest job in the country – the answer is no one.

While we are all sickened by circumstances surrounding the death of George Floyd, let us not paint a broad brush against the one million public safety officers who have over a quarter of a billion interactions with people every year. These public safety officers are our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, neighbors, friends, nephews, nieces, mothers, fathers, and so on. The law-abiding public safety officers should be thanked for their service, not punished for a few bad actors.