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Trump's Covert Cuts to Law Enforcement

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In 1983, the body of a 21-year-old woman was found in Candy Cane Park in La Grande, Oregon. For more than 40 years, her killer evaded justice. Then, finally, a special investigator, supported by a Department of Justice (DOJ) grant, appeared to be closing in. The cold case, which had haunted a small community for decades, was moving toward an arrest.

Then Washington cut off the money.

The grant supporting that investigator was among more than 370 grants, totaling more than \$819 million, that the Trump Administration terminated last April after they were flagged by a former Tesla employee working with the US Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE). Because DOJ clawed back the funds, local officials in Oregon were forced to halt the investigation. The suspected violent criminal remained free.

This case is one example of the large gap between President Trump’s “law and order” rhetoric and his Administration’s actual record. Trump praises police, glorifies crackdowns, and attacks anyone he can brand as soft on crime. But while he wraps himself in the politics of public safety, his Justice Department has been weakening the infrastructure that helps communities prevent violence, investigate crime, support victims, and keep officers on the street.

For years, Republicans have tried to pin the phrase “defund the police” on Democrats. Yet it is Trump’s Justice Department that has withheld, delayed, canceled, and redirected public safety dollars Congress approved. More than half of last year’s funds have still not reached the police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, victim service providers, and violence prevention programs waiting for them. This Administration treats local law enforcement less like public safety partners and more like props in a political production.

These dollars are vital for public safety in American communities. The Justice Department’s Office of Justice Programs (OJP) is one of the federal government’s central pipelines for state and local public safety funding, awarding an average of \$3.9 billion a year over the past decade to support public safety nationwide. Agencies rely on these grants to hire officers, buy body cameras, support prosecutors, serve crime victims, and fund anti-violence programs. Decades of research show these investments significantly reduce violent crime.

But since Trump took office, that support has slowed dramatically and, in some cases, been reversed.

In fiscal year 2025, Congress provided OJP with more than \$4 billion for policing, justice systems, violence prevention, and victim services. Under a normal timeline, most of that money would have been awarded by September 30, 2025, the end of the fiscal year. Instead, nearly six months later, less than half—just \$1.99 billion—has gone out the door. Instead of

posting applications for fiscal year 2026, OJP is leaving communities waiting on last year's money.

That means police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and victim service providers across the country are still waiting on funding that should already be at work in their communities. The direct consequences include stalled investigations, delayed hiring, disrupted planning, and fewer tools for agencies already stretched thin.

And the Administration's failures do not stop at delays. In April 2025, DOJ terminated hundreds of grants, including funding tied to police training and officer wellness. The majority of the terminated grant money—\$500 million—had been awarded but not yet distributed. The National Association of Counties warned that many of the canceled grants were already midstream, forcing recipients to stop work after programs had been built, staff hired, and communities had come to rely on the services.

The cuts hit the Rural Violent Crime Reduction Initiative, the VALOR Initiative to improve officer safety and wellness, and the State and Local Anti-Terrorism Training (SLATT) program, which, since 1996, has trained more than 427,000 law enforcement officers to respond to domestic and international terrorism, targeted violence, and hate crimes.

DOJ also cut programs that many police leaders say help them do their jobs more effectively, including community violence intervention efforts that prevent shootings and retaliation before officers have to respond to another crime scene. It cut more than half of all federal gun violence prevention funding as well. In response, 18 law enforcement groups and police chiefs urged Attorney General Pam Bondi to restore the grants, calling them “lifesaving, law-enforcement-enhancing strategies that work.”

Hundreds of DOJ grantees have appealed these cancellations, but those appeals are languishing. As of December, more than 170 appeals from the grants canceled in April were still pending. In the meantime, programs have laid off staff or shut down altogether.

Trump is asking more of police while giving less. His immigration enforcement agenda has made policing harder on the ground, straining local resources, raising tensions in communities, and complicating the work of building public trust.

Trump wants the politics of being pro-police without the responsibilities that come with it. He wants the raids, the rhetoric, the imagery, and the applause lines. But the real test of a public safety agenda is not how forcefully it talks, but whether it makes communities safer.

This one does the opposite. It leaves law enforcement agencies waiting, prevention programs collapsing, and local communities with fewer tools to stop violence and respond to harm. If the Administration continues down this path, the cost will be measured in

preventable violence, weakened trust, and American communities made more dangerous by a president who claims to back the blue while his Justice Department defunds the police in practice.
