

Supporting Our Police Officers Now, Is More Important Than Ever

The spread of COVID-19 has led to a national lockdown, with states implementing social distancing rules, curfews, and business closures. The lockdown has put immense strain on both the economy and the social lives of everyone in the country, which is making millions of people feel agitated. That agitation is becoming specifically directed towards law enforcement officers and the other professionals who support them. The decrease in public support towards officers is concerning considering the heightened scrutiny and distrust of the last decade, and now that same distrust is slowly spreading through communities that had previously been a bastion of support for officers. The role that police officers are playing, enforcing the new laws and regulations around social distancing and various closures, has been a target of individuals and groups that are resisting stay-at-home measures and other actions made to keep the overall public safe. The environment that is developing is potentially hazardous to officers as more and more people resist following the laws put into place, but that is not the only thing that could harm law enforcement personnel. COVID itself is a huge danger to those patrolling uniform, and the NYPD is a perfect example. At one point, nearly twenty percent of the NYPD workforce was out sick, and already more NYPD employees have died during this crisis than during the World Trade Center attacks. This comes along with a rise in commercial business burglaries following a declared state of emergency as police struggle to respond to calls with a diminished department. The lack of equipment for law enforcement has made responding to calls and patrolling extremely dangerous for officers, especially as they risk infecting fellow officers, as well as their families, both of which are powerful incentives to avoid working. It does not help that there are reports of criminals and belligerent individuals claiming to have COVID and attempting to transmit to the officers in front of them, turning regular resistance into potential bioterrorist actions. Police officers need to be assured that their state and federal governments are committed to protecting the people who enforce the social distancing regulations the same as they protect healthcare workers.