

The President's Weekly Address

August 15, 2015

Hi, everybody. It's now been a year since the tragic death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. His death—along with the events in Cleveland, Staten Island, Baltimore, Cincinnati, and other communities—sparked protests and soul searching all across our country. Over the past year, we've come to see, more clearly than ever, the frustration in many communities of color and the feeling that our laws can be applied unevenly.

After Ferguson, I said that we have to face these issues squarely. I convened a Task Force on community policing to find commonsense steps that can help us drive down crime and build up trust and cooperation between communities and police, who put their lives on the line every single day to help keep us safe. And I've met personally with rank and file officers to hear their ideas.

In May, this Task Force made up of police officers, activists, and academics proposed 59 recommendations: everything from how we can make better use of data and technology, to how we train police officers, to how law enforcement engages with our schools. And we've been working with communities across America to put these ideas into action.

Dozens of police departments are now sharing more data with the public, including on citations, stops and searches, and shootings involving law enforcement. We've brought together leaders from across the country to explore alternatives to incarceration. The Justice Department has begun pilot programs to help police use body cameras and collect data on the use of force. This fall, the Department will award more than \$160 million in grants to support law enforcement and community organizations that are working to improve policing. And all across the country—from States like Illinois and Ohio, to cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and Nashville—local leaders are working to implement the Task Force recommendations in a way that works for their communities.

So we've made progress. And we'll keep at it. But let's be clear: The issues raised over the past year aren't new, and they won't be solved by policing alone. We simply can't ask our police to contain and control issues that the rest of us aren't willing to address as a society. That starts with reforming a criminal justice system that too often is a pipeline from inadequate schools to overcrowded jails, wreaking havoc on communities and families all across the country. So we need Congress to reform our Federal sentencing laws for nonviolent drug offenders. We need to keep working to help more prisoners take steps to turn their lives around so they can contribute to their communities after they've served their time.

More broadly, we need to truly invest in our children and our communities so that more young people see a better path for their lives. That means investing in early childhood education, job training, pathways to college. It means dealing honestly with issues of race, poverty, and class that leave too many communities feeling isolated and segregated from greater opportunity. It means expanding that opportunity to every American willing to work for it, no matter what ZIP Code they were born into.

Because, in the end, that's always been the promise of America. And that's what I'll keep working for every single day that I'm President. Thanks, everybody, and have a great weekend.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:10 a.m. on August 7 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on August 15. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 14, but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on August 15.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Weekly addresses.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Subjects: Law enforcement and crime : 21st-Century Policing, President's Task Force on; Law enforcement and crime : Criminal justice system, reform efforts; Law enforcement and crime : Law enforcement and crime : Community-oriented policing, strengthening efforts; Law enforcement and crime : State and community law enforcement agencies, Federal support; Missouri : Ferguson :: Death of Michael Brown.

DCPD Number: DCPD201500560.