

COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

My name is John Garrido and I recently retired from the Chicago Police Department with almost 32 years of service. During that time, I worked as a patrolman; undercover narcotics buy officer; a violent crimes detective; a homicide sergeant, a community policing lieutenant, a tactical lieutenant and a field operations lieutenant. Two thirds of my career was spent on the south and west sides of Chicago.

I'm here today to discuss the adverse effects of politics on law enforcement in Chicago. While law enforcement and politics should operate in distinct spheres, their intersection severely undermines the efficiency and credibility of our police force.

When politicians prioritize ideological goals over evidence-based practices, it puts our officers in a difficult position. They become pawns in a larger political game, forced to enforce laws and policies that may not necessarily serve the best interests of public safety.

Political agendas also heavily impact how resources are allocated to our department. The “Defund the Police” movement has had dire consequences. The result? A police department that is both underfunded and understaffed, compromising our ability to serve and protect.

We often hear that the “silent majority” supports the police. Unfortunately, here in Chicago, the “silent majority” is asleep at the wheel. Despite having over 1.5 million registered voters in Chicago, nearly one million stayed home during the last mayoral election. These numbers happen election after election. The result is allowing a radical minority electing politicians with agendas that don't serve the broader community's interests.

We have a Mayor that scolds reporters for “demonizing” “children” when asking questions about the mobs of teens that regularly rampage throughout our downtown business district, destroying property and stealing anything they can get their hands on.

Lack of voter interest has given us State Legislators who raised the threshold for felony theft from \$300 to \$500 and State's Attorney Kim Foxx who unilaterally decided to increase that same threshold even higher, from \$500 to \$1000.

Illinois State Legislators recently passed the nearly 800-page SAFE-T Act, introducing no-cash bail, without due discussion.

On the first day of NO CASH BAIL last week, individuals charged with violent crimes were released without any restrictions.

Two people charged with robbery and a guy accused of punching a Chicago Police Officer in the face were sent home with no request for detention by our “prosecutor”. Another offender was sent home without any restrictions after being accused of attacking 4 police officers and sending two of them to the hospital. Once again prosecutors did not request to have a detention hearing.

Chicago politicians often make sweeping generalizations that don't reflect the complexities of law enforcement. These same politicians publicly refer to our police department as systemically racist. This not only undermines public trust but also affects officers' morale and effectiveness.

Constant political interference has had a detrimental impact:

Just in the first 100 days since our new mayor was sworn in on May 15, 2023 we have had
Over 200 homicides
Over 900 people shot
Over 2,500 robberies
Over 5,000 cars stolen
Over 2,000 burglaries
And over 300 carjackings

Almost 15,000 people have been shot and nearly 3,000 have been murdered since January 2020.

The problem is that these numbers have become so normalized, they don't shock the public anymore.

2,317 shot so far in 2023; 478 murdered

3,600 shot in 2022; 738 murdered.

4,543 shot in 2021; 856 murdered

4,174 shot in 2020; 798 murdered

14,634 shot since Jan 2020, 2,870 murdered

An average of over 3,500 a year shot

Over 700 people a year murdered

Department policies, lack of manpower and Illinois laws have impacted our ability to make arrests. Dropping over 83% from about 225,000 in 2006 to about 38,000 a year the last couple years.

Catalytic converter thieves are now carrying guns and shooting at residents when confronted all over the city.

Car jakers are getting younger and younger with most under the age of 18 years old. Four carjackers were just arrested a couple days ago with ages 12 to 16 years old.

Officers are retiring and resigning at alarming rates of over one thousand officers a year. We are currently down over 2,000 officers and the number increases every year as we fail to keep up with attrition.

Of the 1,100 that left the job last year, over 350 were resignations and most were lateral transfers to other departments. They are not leaving law enforcement; they are leaving Chicago law enforcement.

Officers are second guessing themselves. With a job that requires you to make split second decisions, second guessing yourself can prove to be a devastating mistake.

One example of this was caught on video where an offender on pcp overcame the officer and repeatedly struck her head on the pavement while other officers tried to subdue him and taze him. They subsequently got him in custody but not until the officer sustained massive head injuries and long-term brain damage.

She later said she thought she was going to die and knew she should shoot him but chose not to because she didn't want her family or the department to have to go through the scrutiny the next day on national news.

It's not just laws that make our community unsafe. These elected officials often discard experience and use race and gender to select leaders for our department. The last superintendent, David Brown, was probably the worst of them all. He brought us scarecrow policing, excessive canceled days off that exhausted our officers, politically motivated punishments and penalties for minor infractions and promotion after promotion of inexperienced officers based solely on their gender or color of their skin.

We have people who have gone from the rank of Sergeant to Deputy Chief in less than 10 months or Sergeant to Commander in 2 months. These officers haven't been given the opportunity to learn and grow in their ranks before moving to the next rank. This has a huge impact on morale and quality of leadership.

And probably the worst statistic of all is our Police suicide rate here in Chicago. Nationwide law enforcement has a suicide rate at 30% over the national average. In Chicago, our Officers kill themselves at a rate 60% higher than the national average. We have been averaging 2 to 3 Officer suicides a year until last year where 7 Chicago Police Officers took their own lives.

Chicago and Illinois politicians have come together to create a toxic work environment like we have never experienced before. Their policies and legislation have made our communities less safe and made it even more dangerous to be a police officer.

We can't afford to let the silent majority remain silent. If you truly care about the safety of our community and the well-being of our officers, then you need to start paying attention to these elections because the consequences have been catastrophic.