

Delivering Accountability

A Plan To Stop Crime in Our Communities

By Neera Tanden and Nick Wilson January 29, 2026

Ensuring the safety and security of the public is the government's most fundamental responsibility. Every person, no matter who they are, deserves to be safe and free from violence where they live and work. Many cities are successfully reducing crime by pairing stronger accountability strategies that deliver swift and certain consequences with proven prevention programs that stop crime before it happens. No amount of violence is acceptable, and the nation can make even more progress to reduce crime by applying lessons learned from what has worked to reduce crime locally.

Read the full report:
["Delivering Accountability: A Plan To Stop Crime in Our Communities"](#)

Rather than focusing on what works to stop crime, in its first year, the Trump administration has removed effective crime-fighting resources from local communities. By firing career prosecutors,¹ asking Congress to cut billions of dollars from federal law enforcement,² pulling law enforcement agents off drug trafficking and child sexual exploitation cases,³ and terminating funding for local crime prevention programs,⁴ the Trump administration is weakening the enforcement of our criminal laws.

Recently, we have seen that poorly trained U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers endanger the lives of Americans across the country,⁵ in sharp contrast to well-trained traditional law enforcement who serve all communities and have been helping drive crime rates to historic lows. It's an important lesson for the country.

Historic progress with strategies that work

In 2025, cities including Baltimore, Chicago, and Philadelphia recorded historic lows in the number of murders by providing law enforcement with the necessary tools and resources to stop crime, by improving the justice system to deliver swift and certain punishment, and by investing in community violence intervention and prevention programs.⁶ We know these strategies work because they are successfully reducing crime in cities across the country.

The Center for American Progress' plan to protect Americans from crime calls for increased federal investment in proven strategies, including:

1. **Holding lawbreakers accountable** by hiring more police officers and detectives, delivering swift and certain consequences, and recruiting additional first responders
2. **Stopping crime** by investing in crime prevention, expanding community violence intervention programs, and reducing recidivism
3. **Disrupting illicit markets** by concentrating federal law enforcement resources on the violent criminal organizations and individuals who profit from the illegal trafficking of drugs, guns, people, and stolen goods

Holding lawbreakers accountable

Evidence shows that certain punishment reduces crime.⁷ When people believe they will be caught, they are less likely to break the law⁸—but today, too many crimes go unsolved in cities and rural areas alike. To catch more offenders and ensure they receive swift and certain consequences, the federal government should:

■ **Help law enforcement agencies hire additional police officers and detectives.**

The federal government should increase funding for local law enforcement to hire, train, and keep the best local officers through the COPS Hiring Program and the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program. Additional federal funding is also needed to hire 7,000 additional detectives to solve homicides and nonfatal shootings.

■ **Fund cities and counties to expand effective policing strategies.** The federal government should provide funding to local law enforcement to address violent “hot spots” and to implement police-community “focused deterrence” partnerships that target the small number of people responsible for the majority of violent crime. To support data-informed policing efforts, additional federal funding is needed to purchase technology and crime intelligence tools that help local police solve crimes, such as real-time crime centers.

■ **Invest in our courts and justice systems to deliver swift and certain justice.**

To speed up prosecutions and achieve faster case resolutions, the federal government should provide funding to hire more local prosecutors, increase the number of judicial positions, expand alternative prosecution models, and modernize technology.

■ **Ensure law enforcement at every level maintains high standards** and strong safeguards against practices that undermine trust or violate civil liberties. Police officers should receive robust and ongoing training to reduce officer-involved shootings and other use-of-force incidents.

Stopping crime

Cities should invest in community violence intervention programs and prevention strategies that address both the immediate safety concerns of community members and the root causes of crime. Once someone completes their sentence, they will be less likely to commit crimes again if they have a true second chance and the opportunity to become a productive citizen.⁹ To prevent crime and reduce reoffending, the federal government should:

- **Expand youth crime prevention efforts**, including by funding summer youth employment programs, offering early education programs, and decreasing childhood lead exposure.
- **Fund local community violence intervention programs** that connect individuals at the highest risk of violence involvement with resources and services to stop violence before it starts.
- **Reduce barriers to reentry** that prevent returning citizens from accessing housing, health care, substance use treatment, and employment opportunities.
- **Fully fund programs that directly serve victims of crime** and bolster the Crime Victims Fund, which supports state victim compensation and assistance programs.

Disrupting illicit markets

We cannot curb crime if we fail to ensure that crime doesn't pay. The federal government must stop the steady flow of drugs, guns, people, and stolen goods across state lines and international borders. To disrupt illicit markets, curb illegal trafficking, and dismantle violent criminal organizations, the federal government should:

- **Dismantle violent drug trafficking organizations** by reestablishing the U.S. Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces and investing in nonintrusive scanning technologies at all ports of entry to reduce the supply of illicit opioids entering the country.
- **Give federal and local law enforcement agencies the resources, tools, and technologies they need to prosecute the highest-level ringleaders**, targeting the money and networks that sustain the operations rather than low-level offenders who are easily replaced.
- **Reduce gun trafficking** by strengthening gun laws, increasing targeted enforcement efforts on straw purchasers and traffickers, and holding negligent firearm manufacturers and dealers accountable.
- **Increase coordination with state and local law enforcement to go after violent criminal organizations** while simultaneously investing in community resources that reduce the demand for their products.

Endnotes

- 1 Patrick Marley, Jeremy Roebuck, and Yvonne Wingett Sanchez, "Trump's DOJ has fired dozens of prosecutors, upending decades-old norm," *The Washington Post*, July 19, 2025, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/07/19/justice-career-prosecutors-staff-firings-trump/>; Suzanne Monyak, "Justice Department Loses a Third of Career Leaders Under Trump," *Bloomberg Law*, September 29, 2025, available at <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/justice-department-loses-a-third-of-career-leaders-under-trump/>.
- 2 U.S. Department of Justice, "Fiscal Year 2026: Budget and Performance Summary" (Washington: 2025), available at <https://www.justice.gov/media/1403736/dl>; Nick Wilson, "The Trump Administration's Budget Will Undermine ATF's Efforts To Prevent Violent Crime" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2025), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-budget-will-undermine-atfs-efforts-to-prevent-violent-crime/>.
- 3 Hamed Aleaziz and others, "Drug Arrests and Gun Seizures Fell as Homeland Security Pursued Immigration," *The New York Times*, November 25, 2025, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/25/us/politics/drug-arrests-gun-seizures-homeland-security-immigration.html>; Nicholas Nehamas and others, "Homeland Security Missions Falter Amid Focus on Deportations," *The New York Times*, November 16, 2025, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/16/us/politics/dhs-agents-reassigned.html>.
- 4 Council on Criminal Justice, "DOJ Funding Cuts: More Than 550 Organizations Impacted, New Analysis Finds" (Washington: 2025), available at <https://counciloncj.org/doj-funding-cuts-more-than-550-organizations-impacted-new-analysis-finds/>; Nicole Ndumele and Ames Grawert, "Crime-Prevention Efforts Face Setbacks After Federal Cuts," Brennan Center for Justice, July 21, 2025, available at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/crime-prevention-efforts-face-setbacks-after-federal-cuts>.
- 5 Dan Herman and others, "The Trump Administration's ICE and CBP Have Become a Threat to Americans: Congress Must Ensure That DHS Follows the Law and Adopts Commonsense Reforms," Center for American Progress, January 28, 2026, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-ice-and-cbp-have-become-a-threat-to-americans-congress-must-ensure-that-dhs-follows-the-law-and-adopts-commonsense-reforms>.
- 6 Jeff Asher, "The Cities That Saw Historic Murder Lows in 2025," Jeff-alytics, January 12, 2026, available at <https://asher.substack.com/p/the-cities-that-saw-historic-murder>.
- 7 National Institute of Justice, "Five Things About Deterrence," June 5, 2016, available at <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-deterrence>; Center for Court Innovation and Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Evidence-Based Strategies for Working with Offenders" (Washington: U.S. Department of Justice, 2014), available at <https://www.innovatingjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Evid-Based-Strategies.pdf>.
- 8 Daniel S. Nagin, "Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century," *Crime and Justice in America* 42 (1) (2013): 199–263.
- 9 Erkmen G. Aslim and others, "The Effect of Public Health Insurance on Criminal Recidivism," *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 41 (1) (2022): 45–91, available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/pam.22345>; Faith E. Lutze, Jeffrey W. Rosky, and Zachary K. Hamilton, "A Multisite Outcome Evaluation of Washington State's Reentry Housing Program for High Risk Offenders," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 41 (4) (2014): 471–491, available at <https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/436/2014/11/Criminal-Justice-and-Behavior-2014-Lutze-471-91.pdf>; California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, "Recidivism Rates Drop for Community Reentry Participants," Press release, August 20, 2025, available at <https://www.cdr.ca.gov/news/2025/08/20/recidivism-rates-drop-for-community-reentry-participants>.