

The Meyers Report

Since 1985

Date: February 21, 2022 Proposed Public Policy

To: Darren Bailey

From: The Meyers Group

Subject: Community Oriented Police (COP) Initiative

Objective: Give police officers a reason to live in and be involved in the communities they police

Oversight: Illinois localities

The Problem: There is an increasing tendency for police officers to feel little to no connection with the communities they serve, because they live outside of those communities. A primary cause is the lack of incentive(s) for leaving their previous home and the possibly higher cost of living in the community that employs them. As such, police officers seek more affordable communities, which results in a lack of connection with the town or city that has been entrusted to them. This hinders good policing in general. However, in a regional emergency such as weather event or human-caused event, police officers could often be inclined to protect their own families and their communities first. This can leave them unavailable for the communities to which they have been assigned. In such an event, lives could be lost.

The Solution: Police officers should be required to live in the communities they serve. This will cultivate a more personal connection with the community, help them stay aware of ongoing issues, and give them the opportunity to develop a clear sense of burgeoning issues within the community. This harkens back to the 'beat cop' principle, where there was a true community connection which helped keep the peace and keep crime low.

Method: Police officers hired into or assigned to a community will be given a reasonable set time for relocating to their community, if they do not already live there. Police departments will be encouraged by this initiative to hire the best candidates.

Among the incentives, an allowance could be provided to make it easier to purchase a home in communities that have higher home prices. Among the incentives to be considered:

- a. Abatements in real estate taxes on homes. This in effect might be a tax-free means of increasing officer compensation.
- b. Loans for home down payments. These loans can be forgivable over time (perhaps amortizing 10% a year after the officer is on the force for at least five years.)

This incentive has the advantage of making better neighborhoods with potentially better schools within the reach of police officers. Most importantly, helping an officer get into a better home will give the officer better appreciation on a primary home investment because it stretches the purchasing power. This will count very heavily the longer the officer stays on the force—which also is a major objective.

Funding: Real estate tax abatements and town financing ability. These programs also will enable the hiring of officers at lower pay scales than might otherwise be necessary to be market competitive.

These same incentives could also be used to attract officers to serve in small town needing a police presence.

Execution: Execution of this initiative will be dependent upon the character, needs, and capabilities of each community. The communities themselves will be best suited for determining how to carry out the recommendations to accommodate their unique requirements.

Auditing: As with any program, this program would be subject to auditing under the direction of the proposed Office of Saving Money, either by a state auditor or an independent auditor selected by the governor, to identify areas for improvement.

Sunset: As will all recommended programs, this program should automatically expire three years from the date of its implementation unless a review process shows that it has provided benefit and should be extended, with recommended amendments, if any.

Summary: The Governor would be advocating for communities to encourage police to take a greater personal interest in the communities they serve by living in those communities and being a part of their day-to-day activities.