

Michigan Governor Whitmer proposes to use federal pandemic relief money to fund the police

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Democratic Party Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced on August 16 that she is proposing to spend \$75 million of federal pandemic relief funds on local police departments throughout the state as part of a proposed MI Safe Communities framework.

The governor outlined the plan at a press conference held at the Farwell Recreation Center on the east side of Detroit and said, “People are scared. They’re afraid to pump their gas or merge onto the highway, pull up to a red light, drive to work, drop their kids off at school. That’s not right, and we cannot and will not accept this. No one should feel unsafe as they go about their lives.”

A press release from the governor’s office said that the proposal is to “invest in local police, get illegal guns off the street, and fund expanded opportunities in jobs, education, and the justice system,” with a portion of the money provided to Michigan under the American Rescue Plan.

The purpose of the media event was to promote Whitmer’s proposal within the Michigan Legislature, which is dominated by the Republican Party, including politicians who collaborated with armed protesters who stormed the state capitol building in April 2020.

At the press conference, Whitmer also said, “We are working together to address the crime increases we’ve seen across the state and across the country.” She said statewide crime increased by 12 percent and murders increased by 36 percent last year.

Whitmer was joined on the platform by other leading Democrats including Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, US Representative Debbie Dingell, State Representative Tyrone Carter and Wayne County Prosecutor Kim Worthy as well as Detroit Police Department Interim Chief James White, all of whom expressed support for

Whitmer’s proposal.

Worthy said that the funds would be used to hire prosecutors so that a backlog of court cases could be cleared up. She also revealed that the Democrats’ approach to the social crisis exacerbated by the pandemic and the government’s response to it is to consider it a matter of law enforcement. Worthy said, “We usually handle between 6,000 and 8,000 domestic violence cases each year. Last year, there were 10,000. This year, we’re on track to have 12,000. We normally handle seven to 12 domestic violence homicides a year; there were 24 last year, and 19 this year.” She then added that the pandemic has had an effect, “but it would be a mistake to lay it all on COVID.”

It is clear that the right-wing initiative of the Democrats is in part a response to the ongoing Republican law-and-order campaign following the George Floyd protests last summer and fall that involved millions of people across the country. The Republicans have specifically targeted Democrats for not denouncing demands of protesters to “defund the police.”

However, the main motivation for increasing the funding of police departments originated with the Biden administration, which itself has been pushing a law-and-order agenda since taking office under the cover of a bogus “police reform” campaign. The Biden administration has encouraged state governments to use federal pandemic relief aid to build up the police.

Representative Carter, who worked in the Wayne County Sheriff’s Office for twenty-five years, said at last week’s press conference, “You will never hear me say defund any police department.”

Whitmer’s proposal was announced on the same day

as a similar plan advanced by likely Republican gubernatorial candidate and former Detroit Police Chief James Craig, who has blamed Democrats for Michigan’s “public safety crisis” for not sufficiently supporting the police.

It is notable that none of the Democrats who spoke at the press conference went into any detail about the dramatic decline in the economic and social conditions of the working-class population across the state over the past 18 months of the coronavirus pandemic. While Whitmer and the others talked at length about how “no one should feel unsafe as they go about their lives” and about the difficulties facing police departments, none of them chose to elaborate on the increasingly dangerous health conditions that confront the public due to the deadly spread of the Delta variant of the virus.

An example of the deteriorating conditions for working-class families in Michigan over the past year is the situation in Clare County in the middle of the state. According to data compiled by 24/7 Wall St, the poverty rate in Clare County stands at 22.7 percent, six points higher than the state average of 16 percent, and life expectancy in the county has fallen to 74.9 years, which is three years shorter than the state average.

Of course, none of the Democrats addressed themselves to the defense of the public in relationship to the organized effort of fascists in Michigan to kidnap and murder Governor Whitmer last October. Far from the plotters’ accomplices in the Republican political establishment being exposed and brought to justice—they planned to transport the governor to the wilderness in Wisconsin and place her before a tribunal to face the death penalty—the Democrats are endorsing their right-wing law-and-order agenda.

Meanwhile, the police violence that was exemplified in the public execution of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers on May 25, 2020 is continuing. According to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*, there have been 560 fatal police shootings so far this year.



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