Philadelphia's Democratic Party government votes unanimously for massive increase in city police budget

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On Thursday, June 23, the Democratic Party-dominated Philadelphia City Council voted unanimously to approve a measure which increases the Philadelphia Police Department's budget by an additional $30 million, bringing its total annual funding to over $788 million.

The funding increase is part of a larger $5.8 billion city budget supported by Democratic Mayor Jim Kenney. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the massive cash infusion for the police was "the most of any city agency, and $150 million more than in 2016, when Kenney took office."

The Democratic mayor also granted the police an additional $23.7 million in order "to cover contractually obligated pay raises for officers," writes the *Inquirer*.

The Philadelphia Police Department is no stranger to large budget increases. Since 2013, the PPD's budget has risen by $231 million. While the 2013 budget was $557 million, the now-adopted 2023 budget is $788 million. This was an 8 percent increase from the preceding 2022 budget.

The city's police union sought to justify its pay raises on the grounds that this would make police more accountable. In reality, the exact opposite has happened.

In preceding years in which the budget has been raised, police-related shootings went up. From 2015-2016, the PPD's budget was increased by $50 million. In 2015 there were 10 officer-involved shootings and in 2016 there were 26 officer-involved shootings. In 2016 alone the PPD made 20,503 arrests.

The Philadelphia Democratic Party's raising of the police budget comes alongside a general growth in open support for law enforcement among the political establishment.

According to the *Philadephia Inquirer*, "[t]he public safety spending plan received final approval … and ended up sailing through Council with little public disagreement among members." It added that this came "just two years after Council voted to effectively freeze police funding following the murder of George Floyd."

This shift in support also occurred among phony "progressives," who during the anti-police violence protests corralled mass opposition into support for the Democratic Party with promises of "reform" and "defunding the police."

Kendra Brooks, a Philadelphia city council member and representative of the Democratic Party-aligned Working Families Party, opposed raising the budget in 2021. In 2020, Brooks declared that "[d]isplays of excessive force against protesters, hostility toward journalists, and rallies behind violent vigilante groups have further called into question whether the PPD's budget is justified."

This year, however, Brooks declared, "I am voting for the budget to recognize the numerous improvements that it contains, which will undoubtedly improve our city's ability to support residents." Brooks tried to balance this full-throated endorsement for more weapons and military equipment for the police by stating the city "must do more to put forward a real vision for recovery, safety, and stability."

Brooks typifies the affluent and grasping middle class layer that is drawn to the Democratic Party. As a member of the Philadelphia City Council, she makes around $130,000 in a city where the median household income is $49,127 and where 19.4 percent of residents

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live in poverty.

The budget increase is being doled out to a police force notorious for its violent and abusive behavior. A report from 2021 indicated that out of around 9,000 civilian complaints against PPD officers, only 0.5 percent, or about 45 incidents, ever go beyond a simple reprimand. Not a single allegation of civil rights violation was ever dealt with by serious measures.

In May, members of the South Philadelphia Task Force were charged with first degree murder for the killing of an unarmed 12 year old, Thomas Siderio Jr.

Siderio, who was white, was shot while “essentially facedown on the sidewalk” by Edsaul Mendoza, an African American police officer, according to the city’s district attorney.

Since 2015, nearly 7,500 people have been shot and killed by police officers across America. Police violence impacts workers regardless of their race. While African American and Hispanic workers are disproportionately killed by the police, the largest number of victims are white.

Further demonstrating the city’s assault on the working class, the 2023 budget includes tax cuts for business income. The rate was previously 6.2 percent but is now being cut to just 5.9 percent. The depleting tax revenue, coupled with the increase in policing, will serve to deepen poverty in the city while cutting the population off from means to improve their situation.

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