

Pennsylvania's Democratic governor ramps up police funding

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Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf last month announced the disbursement of \$170 million in special funding for Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies.

The funding was set aside in the 2022-2023 budget, which was easily ratified by both houses of the legislature and signed into law by Wolf last July. It is Wolf's final budget. He will be replaced as governor on January 17 by fellow Democrat Josh Shapiro, formerly the attorney general. Shapiro defeated Trump-backed candidate, State Senator Doug Mastriano, in the November elections.

The additional funding is earmarked for two programs, the Local Law Enforcement Support (LLES) and the Gun Violence Investigation and Prosecution (GVIP). These are both under the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD).

The \$170 million will be distributed to 220 police departments across the entire commonwealth. Funding varies widely, from grants to tiny Duncansville Borough, which received \$6,400, all the way up to Philadelphia, which received \$25 million. The grant to Philadelphia comes after the city approved in July a \$30 million increase to the police department's budget, bringing it to \$788 million.

Remarking on the funding, Wolf said that the "the grant programs are one more tool in our toolbox to create safer communities across Pennsylvania," adding that with "adequate resources, our local law enforcement and investigative offices can better protect and serve."

By "safer communities" Wolf really means arming the police for the defense of the capitalist order against an increasingly angry working class, under conditions of massive and growing social inequality. Pennsylvania's extra police funding is part of a ruling class drive to prepare for social repression, a campaign

heightened by the wave of protests that shook cities and towns across the US in response to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020.

The preparations have taken on the characteristics of war mobilization. Under the US Department of Defense's 1033 program, police departments across the country, including in Pennsylvania, have received over \$1.6 billion in military equipment over the past two decades. Much of the merchandise handed off to police departments from the DOD has no purpose other than warfare. They include items like mine-resistant vehicles and various weapons like military-grade rifles and grenade launchers.

The most recent budget allocates \$585 million for the Pennsylvania State Police, a special police force established in 1905 in response to the anthracite coal strike of 1902, with the express purpose of controlling the state's working class. The budget also includes nearly \$2 billion in state money for correctional facility operation.

The national media regularly presents Pennsylvania politics as "deeply divided" between its major cities, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, on the one hand, and its many small towns, on the other; and between liberal Democrats such as Wolf and Trump-oriented Republicans. However, as is the case with funding for the imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine, there is no dispute between Republicans and Democrats on police funding. Both the liberal Shapiro and the fascist-minded Mastriano issued dueling press releases in July claiming credit for securing the additional police funding. Mastriano called it a "law enforcement grant recovery program," and Shapiro referred to the funding as making possible "hero retention bonuses" for police.

The true class convictions of Wolf and Shapiro, and

the entire policy set-up, are revealed as much by what is not funded. The budget allocates only \$1 million for providing food on college campuses, and \$2 million to assist incarcerated women in finding jobs after serving out their sentence. Only \$6 million is allocated for the prevention and response to the opioid epidemic. Opioids are responsible for nearly 80 percent of drug overdose deaths according to CDC data and killed 5,168 people in Pennsylvania in 2021.

The state budget also cut corporate net income taxes from 9.99 percent to 8.99 percent.



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