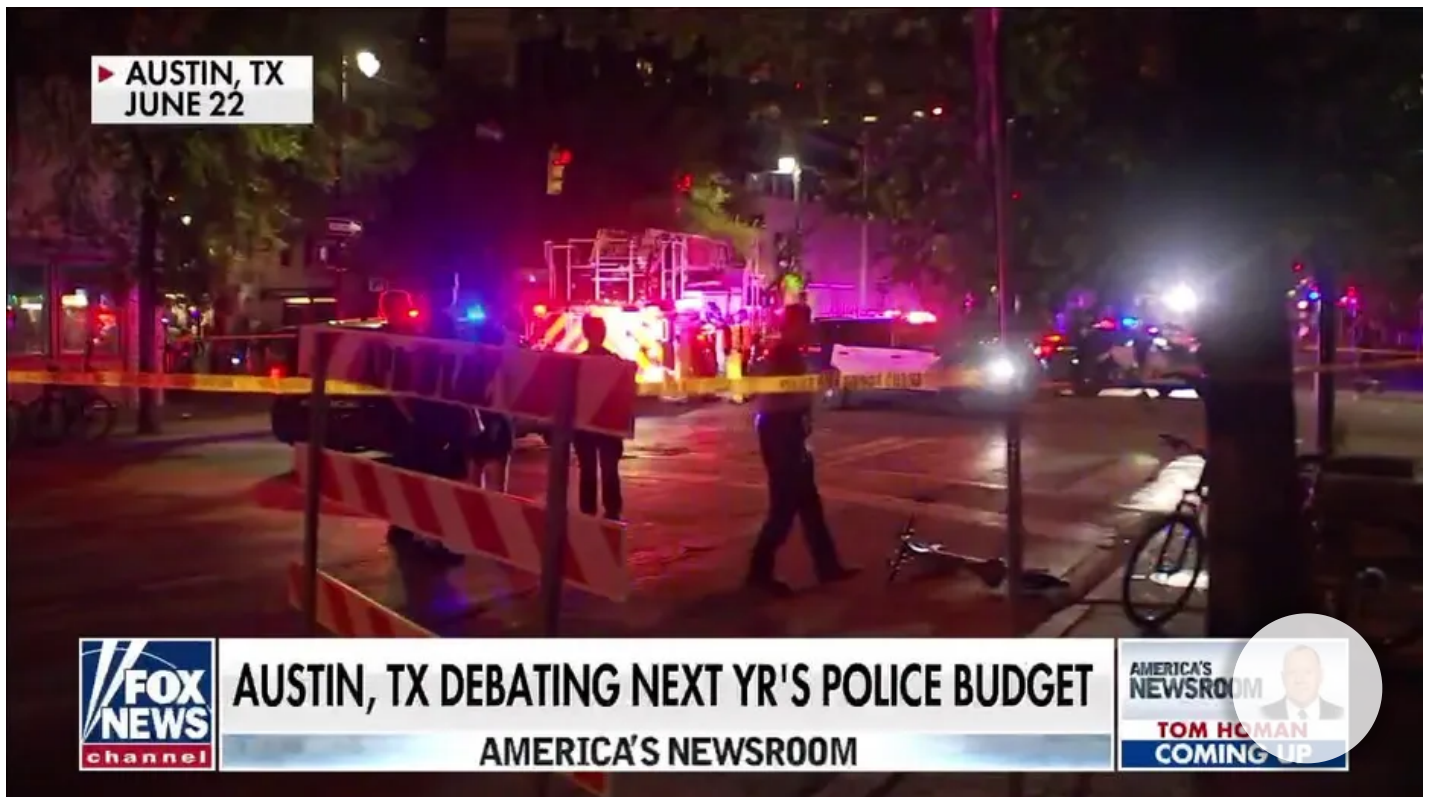


AUSTIN · Published 5 hours ago

Austin police shortage at 'crisis' level, 911 callers forced to wait

Crime was going up even before Austin's police department's budget was cut

By Casey Stegall | Fox News



Austin, Texas sees fallout of defunding police

Fox News senior correspondent Casey Stegall reports on Austin's police budget.

What would you do if somebody broke into your home? How would you handle seeing a [violent crime](#) in progress? What if a loved one was in immediate danger? The majority of Americans would pick up the phone and dial 911 to request help from their [local police departments](#). But what happens when there aren't enough public servants to answer everybody's plea?

In [Texas](#)' capital city of [Austin](#) – home to a [major university](#) and a spot that attracts millions of tourists annually – the man currently at the helm of the city's police department is worried. He says

his hands are effectively tied after the city council voted last August to [strip millions from the Austin Police Department](#).

"I call it a crisis because it is a crisis," interim Austin Police Chief Joseph Chacon said.

DEMOCRATIC-LED CITIES EFFORTING FOR DEFUNDING POLICE SPENT MILLIONS ON PRIVATE SECURITY

Chacon was referring to unprecedented staffing shortages inside his agency, including top administration leaders, as a result of the partial defunding. Chacon himself is currently vying with six other candidates in the ongoing national search for the department's top spot, which is to be filled in August.

"About 150 positions are vacant right now," Chacon said. "That's not good for our overall crime rate in Austin."

With fewer officers on the streets and no major recruitment plans in the works, law enforcement experts say it's having a major ripple effect through [one of the fastest-growing U.S. cities](#).

"Murders are up 96% compared to this time last year," Cary Roberts of the Greater Austin Crime Commission said.

While Roberts stressed that Austin crime was going up even before the police department's budget was cut, now the situation is even dicier.

"These are categories that concern the community so we need to do everything we can to address these problems, and to do it quickly," he said.

To make matters worse, now just getting officers to the scene of an emergency is proving to be a challenge. Current data shows the average police response time to a Priority 1 call (the most serious) is around nine minutes.

POLICE DEFUNDED: MAJOR CITIES FEELING THE LOSS OF POLICE FUNDING AS MURDERS, OTHER CRIMES SOAR

"When they get there, they then likely have to wait for back-up," said Kevin Lawrence, who serves as executive director of the Texas Municipal Police Association.

"They don't have the resources they need to actually address whatever the situation is," he said.

Lawrence and others said the situation has [grown increasingly dire](#) in the last year, after the Austin City Council cut \$21.5 million from the police budget and diverted another \$128 million away, injecting it into other city departments. That reduction accounted for a third of its total police

budget. Austin was one of at least 20 major U.S. cities to trim police funding in the wake of 2020's protests against police brutality.

Supporters of the defund the police movement lauded the Austin City Council's decision. Kathy Mitchell, with a group called "Just Liberty," said it was much needed.

"We don't want to have an overfunded Austin Police Department," she said.

Joao Paolo, a member of the Austin Justice Coalition, agreed with that sentiment but expressed fears that change could soon be on the way. This week, the city council is expected to review and approve next year's police budget. Paolo is afraid the **members will cave to political pressure.**

"Everything that we won last year is now at stake," he said.

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Members of the law enforcement community don't see it that way. They fear if the same amount of money is withheld again, the situation could easily go from bad to worse.

"We have to make evidence-based public policy decisions that keep the community safe & not be reactionary and reckless," said Cary Roberts of the Greater Austin Crime Commission.

In an effort to keep other Texas cities from following in Austin's footsteps, Texas Republican [Gov. Greg Abbott](#) has since signed multiple pieces of legislation that would penalize communities for taking funds away from police budgets.

If a municipality larger than 225,000 residents takes away funding from law enforcement, the state would ban the city from increasing property taxes and sales tax revenues would be withheld. Larger metro areas (with more than 1 million residents) must now hold local elections before any reductions or allocations can be made with police department budgets.

"We have seen the consequences of defunding and dismantling law enforcement in communities across the country," said Abbott. "This puts residents in danger and invites crime into communities and we can't allow this in Texas."

Casey Stegall joined Fox News Channel (FNC) in 2007 and currently serves as a correspondent based in the Dallas bureau. He previously served as a Los Angeles-based correspondent.



Conversation 743 Comments

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What do you think?

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L LeftistWingNuts · 4 hours ago

There is a huge wave of change coming. I live in a city about the size of Austin and they are down here by last I. heard over 100 positions as well in the Police Dept. The Detention Center is down 70, and they have announce retirements by the end of the year that will push that to almost 100 as well. They advertise on the TV during the news for people, which in living here for 30 years I've never seen doen. I hae family in law enforcement here as well and they are telling me no one is signing up for the 3 months of training required.

That said, crime is way up here as well. We have already hit last years crime levels across the board with 5 more months to go. People are noticing, big time. Elections in 2022 are really going to surprise some people, wait and watch.

Reply 👍 128 🗨️ 1

M mrp536 · 3 hours ago

Replying to LeftistWingNuts

Democrat run cities are pursuing the Thunderdome model.

Reply 👍 72 🗨️ 1

↩️ 2 replies


david1956 · 3 hours ago

Replying to LeftistWingNuts

When seconds count, cops are minutes or more away. Learn to protect yourself.

(Edited)

Reply  63 

 Show 4 more replies

keepitbalanced · 4 hours ago 

"What would you do if somebody broke into your home? How would you handle seeing a violent crime in progress? What if a loved one was in immediate danger?" The answer to those questions is I would arm myself with one of my firearms that the 2A says I can own (and that I train with regularly) and I would use whatever level of force was needed to end any threat. Only after that would I distract myself by grabbing a phone and calling 911. In many cases a two minute response time would not be enough.

Reply  114 

JadedUSMCVet · 4 hours ago 

Replying to keepitbalanced

Good man ! I salute you

Reply  43 

CATFISHER · 2 hours ago 

Replying to keepitbalanced

Exactly... I have a ten second response system ready, able and willing to stem any illegal entry into or on to my property... as well.

Reply  14 

 Show 1 more reply

SagittariusA* · 4 hours ago 

"What would you do if somebody broke into your home? How would you handle seeing a violent crime in progress? What if a loved one was in immediate danger? The majority of Americans would pick up the phone and dial 911 to request help from their local police departments." I'd put down the threat, then call the police. But hey, I guess I'm not in the majority.

Reply  170 

Dewey,CheathamandHowe · 3 hours ago 

Replying to SagittariusA*

In Texas, it's pull out your gun and solve it yourself, which should be the same for everyone. Police can't make it in time.

Reply  59 

itsonyoutobetteryourself · 3 hours ago 

Replying to SagittariusA*

Anyone stepping into my home without permission will leave in a bag. I'd be calling the coroner not the police

Reply  58 

 Show 3 more replies

J **JoLo85** · 3 hours ago

How about mandating that public official only receive private security at direct cost. That is the cost of their security be directly taken from their position salary. They would then have to rely on the same security as their constituents. Seems far doesn't it?

Reply  25 

annette_1113 · 4 hours ago

I live outside of Austin. The Mayor, council have never worked with the police department there.....so when Defund the Police happened they got on the band wagon....always something wasn't right. So many have walked away. Too many politics, too much spending by the Mayor never doing what he promises to do.....gee who would have thought they had a shortage of 911 staff or police officers. The attacks on 6th Street and University of Texas past few years, has demonstrated what they all should have been aware of and fixed. It's not like it hasn't been in the news for years, and the homeless and the Mayor is a good indication of what is not happening for them since before Covid, so no excuses Mayor.....! *(Edited)*

Reply  119 

Q **quantum.effect** · 2 hours ago

Replying to annette_1113

Don't you just hate it? There's never a social worker around when you need one.

Reply  14 

D **dr.joesphgoebbles** · 4 hours ago

Replying to annette_1113

Onward through the fog!

Reply  12 

D **DaDuke** · 4 hours ago

This is 100% what they supported and voted for. The bigger problem is that this liberal city will continue to blindly vote democrat despite their continual failed policies and decisions.

Reply  71 

↩ 1 reply

ninefinger83000 · 3 hours ago

I was offered 100k, moving expenses and a per diem to leave my department(FI FWC). To move to Austin as a LEO. I told them I wouldn't do it for a million.

Reply  24 

tsudonymn · 5 hours ago

The people of Austin need to take their city back from the liberals. Start with voting and election reform and then follow plain common sense (which is a commodity that the liberals don't possess).

Reply  290 

conroydawn · 4 hours ago 

Replying to tsudonymn

It's time to start defending ourselves since we don't have law enforcement to help us, due to no fault of their own. Is that really what these cities want?

Reply  46 

MattMat · 4 hours ago 

Replying to tsudonymn

The people of Austin want their city in the hands of liberals. The people of Austin are overwhelmingly liberal and they gladly drink the liberal kool-aid pouring out of the University of Texas at Austin.

Reply  187  1

 1 reply

 Show 6 more replies

K **K8cantwaitfor2024** · 5 hours ago 

Every single police officer needs to walk off job tomorrow on that force until they rescind their defund mandate. Give them a taste of the chaos they crave for a week. Then they will be giving raises and rehiring bonuses.

Reply  340 

R **RICHARDHALLEY** · 4 hours ago 

Replying to K8cantwaitfor2024

Unfortunately it may be too late; good cops are retiring in record numbers and there are few new recruits to replace them.

The outcome of de funding law enforcement was clear to anyone of reasonable intelligence; the folks who elected liberal mayors and city councils failed the IQ exam and deserve the consequences.

Reply  119 

 2 replies

B **bud84** · 4 hours ago 


Replying to K8cantwaitfor2024

I agree this would be a strong statement but the police officer career would be in danger, just refuse to protect any elected person in Austin and someone should also make their address public, make them fair game allow protest at there homes and refuse to respond to there residence during the protest and if they hire people to

protect them , make sure they do not violate the protester rights (fight danger with danger)

Reply  25 

 1 reply

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T **tinkdawg** · 5 hours ago 

I can't believe this is happening in Austin, Texas. Over the last year I have grown to respect Texas in it's fight against the left and finishing the wall. I have plans to relocate to Texas within the next 8 months. I live in the East. The cities are democratized now to the point that only armed civil war will stop them. I want a good place for my kids to grow up. It's becoming a war zone here. I hope Austin gets the police the funding they need.. If this sounds like a cry for help...It is ! Governor Abbott, Fix this !


Reply  122  3

T **tejas3** · 4 hours ago 

Replying to tinkdawg

Don't live in the big cities - move to a rural area outside a big city where most conservative Texans live. The small towns are the best towns as long as the dims aren't in control. As a Texan, seeing our great state go down like this is so disheartening, but the majority are conservative - Keep Texas Red!

Reply  63 

 2 replies

FrankPadia · 3 hours ago 

Replying to tinkdawg

As long as you do not live in the actual large cities, but in the suburbs you will be okay. The cities proper(Dallas, Houston, Austin, San Antonio, El Paso, Ft Worth) are what are controlled by Dems. Leave the cities and it is all red which is why Dems are fighting so hard to rig the voting system.

Reply  32  1

 2 replies

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