



We Need Retired Cops Running for Elected Office

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In recent months, the important role of elected officials at all levels has been made painfully clear for law enforcement officers, for their families and for those citizens who support their mission. When elected officials—particularly at the local or state level—fail to stand up for the basic principles of law and order, communities can quickly devolve, and innocent people can quickly become victims. Decades of progress within law enforcement agencies and in the communities in which they serve can be set back by mayors, city council members, state representatives and governors who are ignorant of, or indifferent to, the vital necessity of law enforcement officers' active presence in our communities.

An age-old complaint is often recited by law enforcement officers, active and retired, who endure the public statements and policy decisions of elected officials whose ideas of policing have no relationship to reality. The complaint tends to boil down to some version of: “*They just don’t know what they’re talking about.*”

But who are the individuals who represent us in elected office? Who are the people willing to dedicate so many hours to campaigning for positions that often pay relatively little? Some are motivated by an altruistic drive to make their community a better place to live. Some, on the other hand, don't have much else to do and are excited by the prospect of gaining an importance that they could never get in their personal lives or in any other line of work. The latter, those motivated by the once-in-a-lifetime chance to gain self-importance, seem all too common in 2020, and their impact on their constituents will eventually be counted in failed businesses and destroyed lives.

Here’s a proposition: What if individuals who did know what they’re talking about actually decided to run against those who did not? What if genuine institutional knowledge,

rather than college classroom talking points, guided the public conversation in an election cycle?

This is why we need retired cops running for elected office—those men and women who have actually seen the impact of violence and disorder on real people. Those who are often stunned by the manner in which elected officials publicly discuss strategies to combat social ills. Those who have actually conducted high risk traffic stops, served warrants on violent offenders and responded to domestic disturbance calls. Those who are regularly disgusted by the way in which politicians cluelessly attempt to analyze police conduct in these scenarios.

In this election year, there are extremely few retired officers running for elected office at the local, state and federal levels. It does not have to be that way. The limits of their job prevents *active* law enforcement officers from fully expressing themselves in public due to the vital importance of maintaining impartiality while on the job. But once retired, there is no such limitation. **Many retired officers have stable income in the form of a pension, children who are grown, and more free time on their hands than ever before in their adult lives. They could make the time to campaign without having to sacrifice their ability to make a living or spend time with their young children—unlike so many citizens who are frustrated by the caliber of our current class of elected representatives but feel unable to step forward to opposition.**

There are many articulate and motivated law enforcement professionals who would prove highly capable representatives, if elected. Even if they were unsuccessful in their campaigns, how many retired cops would speak truth to nonsense from a place of personal experience that few people can? Doesn't the prevalence of military veterans in this year's election cycle demonstrate that the public responds to candidates who have unique first-hand knowledge of the most fundamental policy issues?

Many retired cops have watched from home as lawlessness is met with indifference by impotent politicians who are more concerned with political gamesmanship and the possibility of seeking a higher office than they are concerned with keeping innocent citizens safe. These men and women have strong views on what should be done and those views are formed by careers spent confronting violence and disorder in order to protect the lives and property of the most vulnerable members of their communities. There is little reason to think that the political realities will change if these men and women stay home.

These are individuals who spent a career putting themselves in harm's way and running towards danger while most ran in the opposite direction. We need these retired cops, these men and women with unique expertise in law and order and poverty and public decay, to step up again.

About the Author

Matt Dolan is a licensed attorney who specializes in training and advising public safety agencies in matters of legal liability. His training focuses on helping agency leaders create sound policies and procedures as a proactive means of minimizing their exposure to costly liability. A member of a law enforcement family dating back three generations, he serves as both Director and Public Safety Instructor with Dolan Consulting Group.

His training courses include [Recruiting and Hiring for Law Enforcement](#), [Confronting the Toxic Officer](#), [Performance Evaluations for Public Safety](#), [Making Discipline Stick®](#), and [Supervisor Liability for Public Safety](#).