

Episode 133: The Future of Policing in America

Bill Walton ([06:41](#)):

All right. Welcome to the Bill Walton show. I'm Bill Walton. Today. I want to talk about a very thorny topic, which is the future of police in America. We seem to be at a point now where everybody's got a strong point of view, both pro and con, and I thought I'd bring our panel of experts on the Bill Walton show team. We have Richard McFadden, Greg Columbus, Brian McNicholl, Frank Wazeter, and Alyona Wazeter. And Alyona, of course, is from Kazakhstan. So she's going to have maybe a different take on policing and we'll be interested in that. Rich, the whole police story, pardon the pun, seems to be a mess right now. What do you think is going on?

Rich McFadden ([07:29](#)):

Well, I think that unfortunately, a few bad situations have spread out to any situation that's deemed unfair to the perpetrator and therefore good cops are being blamed for bad people's actions. This one kind of hits home for me because my brother was a DC cop in Anacostia, Washington DC, which is the worst neighborhood in DC. And when he first started working for the Washington DC Police Department, he volunteered for that neighborhood because he never wanted a Congressman or a Senator or an aid telling him, do you know who I am? He wanted to work with real people. And he wanted to see if he could make real change. They worked closely with the schools.

He worked closely with the kids. He dressed up as Santa Claus and took underprivileged kids shopping every Christmas. But after 25 years of service, he decided that his pension was not worth losing because somebody could take 10 seconds of a cell phone video and share it on social media and get the wrong impression over a situation that he has come up against in his neighborhood. It's a bad neighborhood, bad things happen. You got to be a tough cop, but he was a fair cop. And he decided to retire early so that he could save his pension and not get thrown in jail for the rest of his life.

Bill Walton ([09:02](#)):

Chicago is seeing record numbers of retirements. I picked up an article.

Rich McFadden ([09:08](#)):

My brother, when he put in for retirement, they told him you have to wait until after the inauguration. And then he was able to retire after the inauguration, but then they put a moratorium on retirement requests because they were getting overrun. Half of the department who could be eligible for retirement was, and they said we can't do this. So they started spacing out who can ask for retirement and when, so you've got a lot of cops sitting right in the DC Police Department who were like, "I'm out of here, day one, when I'm eligible." And you know what they're replacing them with? Nothing good.

Bill Walton ([09:51](#)):

Brian, thoughts.

Brian McNicoll ([09:54](#)):

What I'm hearing is that when you have those people, as Rich was saying, a lot of that, it's not going to be regulated. People are not going to be there to make sure you did it right. It's going to be up to you

making judgment calls in the moment, all the time, right? It was literally A, life and death B, right or wrong C, terrible or great or whatever. And you have to make a snap judgment on that. And so you're replacing people who've been doing it for 25 or 30 years with people who need a job, because you're now going to be recruiting people into police work that probably are not suited for it just to fill the vacancies. There's that enormous amount of vacancies in police now, all over the country.

Bill Walton ([10:41](#)):

Well, and I think the United States, we've been blessed to have police that we generally think are on the side of law and order and are decent people. Obviously there's some bad apples, which we've heard a lot about, but that's not the vast majority of police. And we've been fortunate in this country because we haven't had a lot of corruption in the police force, Alyona you're from Kazakhstan. You were saying before we came on what's your view of the police in Kazakhstan?

Alyona Wazeter ([11:12](#)):

Well, it's the absolute opposite here. People actually do call 911, do go to the police in order to solve something, in order to get some help. Back in Kazakhstan, you would see a patrol walking down the street. If you might be doing something that let's say you're not supposed to, you would run right off the bat because they will make sure to grab you. And being a kid, you were in more trouble than you should be. And as more of an adult and especially driving down the street and not really breaking in your rules, you might be pulled over for no reason. And the only way you can actually get out of it is pay them off. Quite literally.

Bill Walton ([12:19](#)):

Yeah. I remember being stopped by a so-called traffic cop in Costa Rica in the middle of nowhere in the country. And he was sort of standing there and after a little bit, he was speaking in Spanish and I was speaking in English and then all of a sudden the universal language appeared and it was, oh, he wanted \$100s. And so he got his \$100 and I drove off, I drove off in my rental. But isn't that really the issue though. I don't want to get into something though, but isn't that sort of the issue here where four of the last police shooting victims, at least the ones that have hit the national stage with videos, they were resisting arrest. And when I'm a kid, basically I'm told if you're stopped by the police, you don't resist arrest at least in America. And that's the way you can keep yourself from getting hurt. And yet increasingly we're seeing lots of kids doing just that. And sometimes for good reason, because they've got records a mile long that, but nevertheless, that is the way you keep from getting hurt or killed. Greg, you can jump in here.

Greg Corombos ([13:38](#)):

Well, that's true. Sure. We've seen that in a number of cases. And of course, even when people are resisting arrest, there are protocols that police are certainly trained to follow. Do you use deadly force? I mean, there are different varieties of resisting arrest. Is one a direct threat to your safety and your life and is the other, just trying to get away and obviously have different tactics in those situations? And that has us now actually having the mayor of Chicago, suggesting that police officers need to get permission from a supervisor to initiate a foot chase of a suspect. And so my podcast partner says that should be titled the helping the criminals get a head start act of 2021. And so what we're seeing here is what I call the shifting of the Overton window. We had the defund the police movement last year in the wake of Georgia.

And of course, if you were to actually literally defund and there was a big debate on the left about whether they really meant that, or they just meant reallocating. And a lot of people on the left said, "No, we really do mean defund." Now, in the wake of the Chauvin verdict. And some of these other cases that we've seen come up, they're saying abolish the police. They're not even talking about the money anymore. They're literally talking about abolishing. And some of these cities that really took a hard left line last summer, like Minneapolis, like Los Angeles have now seen their political leaders come back and say, actually we do need more money because crime is rampant. Our forces dropping in numbers like Rich was talking about. And the morale is just plummeting.

I think it was Albuquerque, New Mexico recently, that those numbers are just absolutely tanking. And they've had crime issues there for a while. And so what happens is you start talking about defunding, you start talking about abolishing and that still seems like the fringe, but the more it's part of the conversation over time, the less crazy it sounds. And so the overall conversation is still ticking to the left and that's not good.

Bill Walton ([15:36](#)):

Yeah. In Portland, Fred Wheeler, who's the mayor there, who was just crazy, progressive and refused to do anything to stop what was happening in Portland just recently came out and said, "It's time to put up in place higher bail, higher pre-trial restrictions." And he pleads for the public to cooperate with the police. And he says, "Our job-

Rich McFadden ([16:02](#)):

Too late.

Greg Corombos ([16:02](#)):

He's had this epiphany a few times but never seems to do much, but we'll see if anybody else, besides the police is interested in helping.

Bill Walton ([16:10](#)):

This is a recurring theme for him. He goes-

Brian McNicoll ([16:12](#)):

Well, Fred Wheeler's problem is he's the mayor, but he's also the police commissioner. And so when they arrest people, and then the prosecutor who was one of these guys who was campaign was funded by Soros perfuses the prosecutor. Even major felony cases, assaulting police officers, setting fire to federal buildings, they just don't prosecute. So, I mean there's a problem is, is like our basic principles of justice or what's on trial here. It's like individual justice, like the guy in Columbus, if that's not a justifiable shoot then there are no justifiable shoot. Girl has her knife ready to plug into somebody's chest and kill them and you can't shoot that person. Then why do we have police? And so they're like, "Oh, that's just another cop killing a black person."

No, that's somebody preventing a murder. That's not the same. Chauvin, in Minnesota, had some discretion over how he handled George Floyd, especially once he was down on the ground and handcuffed him and so forth. This guy had no discretion. He had no moment to like consider and I have people like, oh, he should've used the taser. It's like, "Ah, let me run to my car," as the knife was coming back, "and grab the taser." So, I mean, we're not judging these things individually anymore. And if you have the relationship with law enforcement, that Alyona was talking about in Kazakhstan, that's a

violation of trust that people don't see the police as an honest arbiter of these situations. That's dangerous on a number of levels. That means our laws don't really matter if we can't enforce them.

Bill Walton ([18:03](#)):

Well. I think that that is the point. I think our laws now are being called into question. You look at immigration laws and you have all these cities declaring themselves sanctuary cities, and the laws seem to be applied now, not blindly, but according to your group.

Frank Wazeter ([18:23](#)):

Right.

Bill Walton ([18:24](#)):

And so if you're part of a privileged group and I used to be part of the privileged group, white male, that's no longer true. But if you're part of a group that's privileged the law that's supposed to be applied one way and so we not only have the policing, but we've got, what are the rules? What are the laws? And if we're not going to enforce them, why should police even bother? They're in town now talking about police shouldn't even be making traffic stops.

Rich McFadden ([18:56](#)):

Here's what all this is going to go. You can say abolish the police, you can say defund the police. And none of that really matters because it's already done because the good cops that are there want to get out, and there are nobody to replace them. We're going to end up with fewer and fewer local police departments and more federal police on the ground. And in 10 to 15 years, I will guarantee you that major cities will not have local police departments. It'll be federal.

Bill Walton ([19:34](#)):

So they're all going to be looking like the capital looks like now where we've got federal troops surrounding the Capitol grounds.

Rich McFadden ([19:41](#)):

Yep. Unless there is some huge turnaround where cities get so bad that the municipalities there realize their wrongs and they bring in and train and create a great turned around police departments.

Bill Walton ([19:58](#)):

Go ahead.

Rich McFadden ([19:59](#)):

Well, that can gain the people's trust again and, and show people that you do need law and order. You absolutely need law and order, and you need to run it well, and you need to fund it well. Unless we do that, we're all looking at federal police force.

Bill Walton ([20:15](#)):

Well, you may be right. There's a reason I call you Yoda. I mean, you always seem to have that insight. I'll put that out there, that you're probably right. But on the other hand, there is a divergence though. And I think that it's increasingly clear that you've got the cultural elite that wants to do all these crazy things,

like get rid of the police, and then you have the rest of America, which is most of us. And we think that would be nuts, including people in the inner city. If you, if you pull them 80, 85 90% of them say don't get rid of the police. That's the only friend we've got [crosstalk 00:20:50].

Rich McFadden ([20:50](#)):

But the media is all over defund the police. I realized that most good thinking Americans don't want to abolish or defund the police, but the perception, culturally.

Bill Walton ([21:05](#)):

Yeah, I understand. But I bet perception could be changing though, if they lose their cultural authority. An example, my case in point is the Academy Awards. The other night, there was some movie called Judas and the Black Messiah, which I admit I didn't watch, but I guess it features Fred Hampton. Who's a Black Panther leader and Fred was quoted repeatedly during the Academy Awards ceremony as quoting Malte's song and he called for the killing of every police officer in the country. And that was in the Academy Awards. And it was right up on stage. They decided not to show clips from the films, but rather they just had the presenters presenting and spewing political opinion. The number of viewers of the Academy Awards fell about 60%. And for the first time in history it was under 10 million. Had 26 million watching the thing last year. So my hope is that the cultural elite have drifted so far away that we're going to regain control of this argument.

Rich McFadden ([22:11](#)):

Yeah. But then you look at social media and what they lost in viewership in the Oscars, they've more than gained on Twitter and Facebook and Clubhouse and all the rest.

Frank Wazeter ([22:26](#)):

It seems to me that it-

Bill Walton ([22:28](#)):

Yeah, Frank.

Frank Wazeter ([22:29](#)):

Yeah. I mean, it seems to me that if you do have this scenario where more and more local cops are saying, "Well, it's not worth the risk to be associated with it," because as Rich was saying, "There's an awkward 10 second clip taken out of context and then I lose my pension. I lose all my benefits of the job, et cetera." And you have a loss of local police departments and you have an increase in federal law enforcement there, because somebody somewhere has to enforce the law. Like there has to be a department that enforces the law, fundamentally. So it seems to me if this all goes to the federal level, and to me it seems like more of a dystopian kind of future where it's more martial law oriented because you've just consolidated more power into the federal government, which is always never a good idea in any context.

Rich McFadden ([23:33](#)):

Hey Bill, can I take us all way down the rabbit hole?

Bill Walton ([23:36](#)):

Sure, why not?

Rich McFadden ([23:37](#)):

Brian mentioned Soros a few minutes ago, and that just takes me back to my... Soros stopped trying to fund federal and national elections. He realized he wasn't getting anywhere. So he started going with local municipalities, like he's funding, the dog catcher and education boards and the local town and county leader, all of that kind of stuff. And he's been hugely successful. So [crosstalk 00:24:08] Brian talked about this and I think that this plays in big time with a lot of these mayors and police chiefs that are against having a police force and for defunding the police. I mean, Brian, I think that he put a lot of the people in place that are creating some of these cities that are having problems.

Bill Walton ([24:27](#)):

Well, didn't he put Kim Davis in place in Chicago. The prosecutor who's just terrible.

Brian McNicoll ([24:31](#)):

Yeah, I was going to say that his focus is not really like mayors and alderman and whatnot, it's prosecutors, and all over the country there's prosecutors-

Bill Walton ([24:40](#)):

And education boards.

Brian McNicoll ([24:41](#)):

[crosstalk 00:24:41] wide election, and he's all over. It doesn't take a lot of money to give someone an insurmountable edge in a one county election. And that's what he's done.

Bill Walton ([24:54](#)):

Alyona, in Kazakhstan are the police all federal, there's no conception of local police? Is it all just the state?

Alyona Wazeter ([25:02](#)):

No, it isn't. Everything is within the state now.

Bill Walton ([25:07](#)):

Okay. And how does one become a policeman in Kazakhstan?

Alyona Wazeter ([25:12](#)):

You go through the school and it takes certain amount of years. You have to be patrolling the streets. You have to serve in certain kind of district first. And then you can [crosstalk 00:25:31].

Bill Walton ([25:31](#)):

But is it considered a political job? For example, Kazakhstan used to be communist under the Soviet Union. I don't know what kind of government, but... Where I'm going with this is you got China, I'm sort of obsessed with China because I'm concerned that what's going on there is going to be happening here. And not necessarily that they impose it on us, but we imposed on ourselves. In China, the Chinese

Communist Party has got each of their political people in these posts like police. Is that true in Eastern Europe as well?

Alyona Wazeter ([26:10](#)):

They do work more for the government versus serving the people.

Bill Walton ([26:27](#)):

Well, that's the key point, protect and serve. Serve the people. That was the watch for, that was the thing, that was the beacon. And I fear that we get this new wave of people and they don't really have the qualifications, the people retiring. That culture could change a lot.

Rich McFadden ([26:46](#)):

Yeah. My wife is from Columbia. So kind of like Kazakhstan I've gotten to see what it's like to drive through your town and see three or four guys in military fatigues sitting on the corner with rifles. And they're just the police it's not a military action. They're just the police. And that's what I fear is coming here. You ride down to DC right now. You see a fence all the way around the Capitol. You see the Humvees and how far does that go?

Brian McNicoll ([27:19](#)):

I don't know. You're talking about federal police. I don't know that that's the way it'll go because if you had a Trump president, would San Francisco want federal police? I don't think so, right?

Rich McFadden ([27:34](#)):

Are you ever going to get a Trump president again? I don't think so.

Brian McNicoll ([27:38](#)):

You're going to have a pretty good shot at it in '24, considering how things are going now.

Rich McFadden ([27:43](#)):

That's a whole other conversation about election.

Brian McNicoll ([27:46](#)):

But what I'm saying is, people who are not aligned with you are not going to want to be policed by you.

Rich McFadden ([27:55](#)):

That's true.

Greg Corombos ([27:56](#)):

Well, speaking of elections, I think it's going to be interesting to see how people in the areas most effected react to this. I mean, we know that in most major urban areas, the vote is pretty lopsided, but if you look at the 2020 elections, Republicans led by Trump did better among African-Americans and they did a lot better among Latinos than expected. And if you look at the polls, we were talking about earlier, some of the strongest numbers for keep-the-police, heck bring even more police in, is in the worst neighborhoods, in the biggest cities in this country. And so part of it is just a growing frustration that you

have these people who don't live in these cities, don't live in these difficult neighborhoods, trying to tell those people I know better than you. And I'm going to come in with my cookie cutter agenda that you don't need police anymore.

And it's going to be fascinating to see how these people respond. It could take a while. And some of these lopsided cities to see a pushback on that. And it might not happen, but I mean-

Rich McFadden ([28:53](#)):

Here's the problem. They don't vote. Those people who want the police who live in the inner cities, they don't vote. So it's those elites outside the city, trying to look out for the people in the city. We know what's best for you. Those are the ones who do vote. And that's where we're stuck.

Greg Corombos ([29:10](#)):

Yeah, that's tough. I mean, every once in a while the city will... I mean, I don't know if New York City is ever going to get back to the point of electing somebody like Rudy was back in 1993, but every once in a while, a big city will do that and when they do, sometimes you see good results, but I don't know when we'll see that or if we'll see it, but I think you're going to see a building resentment for this kind of pat on the head, "I know better than you, even though you're the one living through this every day."

Bill Walton ([29:37](#)):

Well, we have friends who have a place... Tony Lo Bianco, the actor who was on this show. He still has a place up in Manhattan. And they've been down here in Maryland and they've got a horse place down here, and he's forced to go back to Manhattan because he's shooting a film. That's great news. He's shooting a film but the bad news is they're afraid to go out during the day in Manhattan. The number of the number of rapes in Times Square have grown tenfold in the last year. I would think this can't continue, I mean, I remember I lived in New York in the early '70s, it was really exciting because there was just law and order. There's none. And then Rudy Giuliani came in and he got the city changed. I mean, if I think we need more local people riding to the rescue, rather than counting on a president to come in and solve these problems. And that's where I think it gets incumbent upon us to figure out how to organize people locally to make these changes.

Greg Corombos ([30:44](#)):

It's exactly how it should happen.

Brian McNicoll ([30:46](#)):

Like you have Virginia. We have 139 members of the legislature, and I think 46 of them are running unopposed. And 44 of those 46 are Democrats. So the first objective would be to find candidates, get people to run.

Bill Walton ([31:06](#)):

Wow. Well, we're coming up with-

Rich McFadden ([31:06](#)):

All right, Bill.

Brian McNicoll ([31:16](#)):

[crosstalk 00:31:16].

Bill Walton ([31:16](#)):

They're waiting for you. I usually like to find lines of actions in the shows where we can say, "Okay, we got this big problem. Here's our line of action. The only line of action we have so far is Donald Trump's going to come back and Trump everything up again. I happen to like the guy, but I'm afraid. I don't think the odds of his coming back are that high.

Greg Corombos ([31:40](#)):

Well, I don't know if it'll be him specifically. We'll see what happens in the midterms. I think that'll be a decent indicator of what may happen in '24, but a lot can happen between now and then and probably not for the good when one side controls a lot.

Bill Walton ([32:01](#)):

Well, we've succeeded in certainly depressing me that I don't see a lot of lines of action in these cities. Anybody want a final word here about policing in America?

Brian McNicoll ([32:14](#)):

I think the Columbus case is huge. I think that if they go after that officer, then we're in big trouble because if what he did is what is deemed to be wrong, then you can't police the country.

Bill Walton ([32:30](#)):

Well, I'm not going to give you a final word. Marine, my producer was just talking about this. I'm not going to bring her on the air, she didn't want to talk about it. But that's one of those videos. If you look at it on Fox, you see it one way where she had a knife and she was going to kill somebody, but that's been edited. And you don't see that version in most of the major networks. And so once again, America's got two different views of what happened because they've edited the tape.

Rich McFadden ([33:01](#)):

Yeah. I think that the big hope here is that the people in the inner cities that really do want police in their neighborhood start to say, "You don't speak for me any longer. I'm going to use my voice and I'm going to tell you how I want our neighborhood to run." Because when they talk about systemic racism, that is the picture perfect example of what systemic racism is, is when the elites outside the city tell them, "We know what's good for you and this is how we're going to run everything. You don't need the police to protect you." And the people in the city are like, "Like, hell I don't." So hopefully that comes to fruition where the people in the cities speak their mind.

Brian McNicoll ([33:47](#)):

You're not here on Saturday night, buddy.

Rich McFadden ([33:50](#)):

Yeah. Right.

Bill Walton ([33:51](#)):

Okay. All right. Well, I think those are good takeaways. Anybody got anything else. Greg?

Greg Corombos ([33:57](#)):

I'm good. I think that's exactly right. It's going to have to happen locally, bit by bit. There's not going to be a national fix.

Bill Walton ([34:04](#)):

Okay. All right. Well, Frank and Alyona Wazeter and Rich McFadden, Greg Corombos, Brian McNicholl. Thanks guys. I think we've at least illustrated what the issues are. And anyway, thanks for joining me and also, thank you all for watching and listening, and we'll see you next time on the Bill Walton Show.