



**Whatcom County
Democratic Socialists of America**
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Members of the Defund BPD Coalition and Whatcom DSA received numerous communications Thursday, September 3rd, from local elected officials claiming that our People's Budget Assembly and March to the Mayor's House to Defund the Police is not "proper" or "civil" and that it "crosses personal boundaries."

When Bellingham Police sadistically "prank" unsuspecting people it's not "proper." When Bellingham Police physically abuse family members then conspire to destroy evidence that "crosses personal boundaries." When Bellingham Police sweep homeless camps in the midst of an acute housing crisis it's not "civil." When Bellingham Police use white supremacist symbols like the Thin Blue Line, that should be "off limits." When Bellingham Police enable ICE menacing our neighbors it is "creepy." When Bellingham Police humiliate and brutalize our queer and indigenous friends they strip them of their "privacy." When Bellingham Police pull guns on drivers during routine traffic stops we are "scared and upset."

Unlike our politicians, poor people, Black, Indigenous, and all people of color, homeless people and all of us in the working class who are vulnerable to police violence don't get to leave politics at the office. Our politics are about life and death.

We need a City budget that cuts the Police budget by at least 50% and reallocates those funds towards community-led health and safety systems, as well as other programs for community well being¹. We need expanded mental health services; safe, secure, and affordable housing for all in our community; expanded substance abuse treatment and harm reduction services; community and cultural spaces for Black and Indigenous Folks; for the City to support Black and Indigenous Economic Development; expanded Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services; worker's cooperatives; food sovereignty programs; community land trusts; diversity, equity, and inclusion in education and youth programs; and an expansion of early childcare and before and after school care programs.

We have communicated our needs to the Mayor and City Council. We have organized multiple call-in campaigns to the Mayor and City Council and received no commitments. We have delivered petitions and received no commitments. We have spoken at "Listening Sessions" and received no commitments. We have spoken at City Council meetings and received no commitments. We have marched on City Hall multiple times and received no commitments. A year ago we supported a person of color running for City council on a platform that included funding housing, healthcare, and jobs. Neither the Mayor nor any member of City Council supported his candidacy.

Instead, we heard loud and clear at the last City Council meeting on Monday, August 31, that instead of cutting the police budget and allocating that savings towards expanding the services that actually keep us safe, City government plans to cut all departmental budgets. This is unacceptable.

¹ <https://actionnetwork.org/petitions/defund-bellingham-police-department>

Our demands—to fund the services that keep us safe and improve our lives—are not new to Bellingham. We have organized to become a true Sanctuary City while City government has made minimal commitments to the safety of immigrants in our community. We have voted multiple times to limit the prison industrial complex while local officials pushed to expand the Whatcom Jail.

Marching on the Mayor's house is not a new tactic. By marching on Seth Fleetwood we are joining the 70% of Americans who support Black Lives Matter² and communities organizing for Black Lives and to Defund the Police in dozens of cities across the country: from Eugene, Oregon, to Lafayette, Louisiana. We are continuing a proud working-class tradition of marching on the boss and careerist politicians. This action is not a personal attack, rather, we are giving the Mayor an opportunity to understand the depth of our commitment.

Until City officials demonstrate that they're more committed to community well-being than to re-winning Police Guild endorsements for their next election, we have no choice but to keep repeating our demands ever louder.

² <https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-activism/can-minneapolis-dismantle-its-police-department>