THE HISTORIC MURDER SPIKE OF 2020 HAS CONTINUED IN 2021

- In 2020, America suffered its largest single-year murder increase in modern history. The total number of homicides jumped by nearly 30%, more than doubling the previous record of 12.7%, set in 1968.
- High levels of violence have continued in 2021. Through the first half of the year, total homicides were up by a combined 21% in 66 of America’s largest police jurisdictions, compared with the same period in 2020, according to the Major Cities Chiefs Association. Shootings in Portland skyrocketed from 388 in 2019 to 891 in 2020. By mid-October, there had already been more than 1,000.

THE MURDER SPIKE CORRESPONDED WITH A REDUCTION IN PROACTIVE POLICING

- The most dramatic increase in murders began after the tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Cities across America went through the same cycle: Rioting and anti-cop agitation precipitated a police pullback, which precipitated a sharp uptick in homicides and shootings.
- We have witnessed a more intense and far-reaching version of what happened in many U.S. cities after the 2014 death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., or what happened in Baltimore after the 2015 death of Freddie Gray: a reduction in proactive policing, followed by an explosion of violence.

URBAN POLICE FORCES ARE FACING A SEVERE OFFICER SHORTAGE

- The events of 2020 took a heavy toll on officer morale. The New York Police Department saw more than 5,300 uniformed officers—about 15 percent of its total force—either resign or file for retirement.
- Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, Portland, Louisville, Baltimore, Raleigh, Minneapolis, and other cities are dealing with similar problems.
- Agency size alone is no substitute for proactive policing. Still, putting more cops on the street helped reduce crime during the 1990s, and we clearly need more on the street today.

Click here to read the full policy focus and learn more about the how we can stop the epidemic of violence in American cities.