

FACT SHEET 3: REMOVE UNFIT OFFICERS

Problem: Misguided department policies such as arrest quotas can often lead to aggression and misconduct. Additionally, unfit officers are often allowed to continue in their positions, despite the existence of complaints, reprimands, and other disciplinary measures.

Solution: Change department policies to avoid encouraging over policing, and establish reliable processes to permanently remove unfit officers and prevent those officers from gaining employment in another state or police force.

Key Facts:

- **Over policing is encouraged** by the emphasis on meeting quotas in evaluating officer performance.
- **Quotas foster harassment** by police within marginalized communities who have little political capital. For example, they contributed to disproportionately high ticketing and arrests of Black residents in Ferguson, Missouri.
- **Anti-quota legislation** is an important start toward removing incentives for racially-biased policing.
- **Decertification — the process of revoking a law enforcement officer’s police license — can be an effective tool** in removing officers involved in wrongdoing.
- Decertification laws **vary greatly by state**.
- Many state laws **make it difficult to permanently remove offenders** from the police force; twenty states require a criminal conviction before an officer can be decertified.
- In many instances, state certifying commissions are **not even aware of decertifiable conduct**. Only half of states require police departments to report to their state Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST), or another comparable state agency, any conduct that could lead to decertification.
- While state decertification prevents intrastate rehiring of officers whose licenses have been revoked, **hiring of those officers in other states** remains a possibility.
- In 1999, the nonprofit International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (“IADLEST”) created the **National Decertification Index (NDI)** to solve this interstate rehiring problem. The NDI is a private national database of officers who have been decertified.
- **The NDI is underutilized**. Only around 3,500 of the 18,000 local law enforcement agencies in the United States regularly query the NDI when they are considering hiring new officers.
- Federal pressure — such as withholding grant money — would be effective in **incentivizing states to query the NDI** when making hiring decisions.