



Written by [James Murphy](#) on July 23, 2021

New “Civilian Commission” Will Oversee Police in Chicago

On Wednesday, the Chicago Common Council voted to create a new civilian commission to oversee policing in the Windy City. The commission is the city’s answer to years of protests and complaints about alleged misconduct of law-enforcement officers in the city.

The vote passed by a 36-13 margin, with the new commission considered to be the first of its kind, giving civilians power and oversight over police actions in Chicago. The new commission will consist of seven members, each elected to four-year terms, and is slated to begin in 2023.



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Alderman Matt Martin called the new law “the strongest civilian oversight law in the country.”

The creation of the new commission is a victory for embattled Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot. In a statement, Lightfoot, who has been hounded by weekly reports of unfettered crime and violence in her city, said she was “beyond thrilled to give our residents further opportunities to hold those who are sworn to protect and serve them accountable.”

During the council meeting, Lightfoot said that the new commission would add another layer of legitimacy to policing efforts in the city.

“Legitimacy is key to the work that our police do,” Lightfoot said. “If the communities do not trust them because they’re not legitimate to them, they will not be effective in their most core mission, which is serving and protecting every single resident of this city.”

Police reform has been a hot-button issue in Chicago since the 2014 police shooting of black teenager Laquan McDonald. McDonald was shot by police responding to a report of someone breaking into cars. McDonald was reportedly holding a knife and walking away from police and disregarding their instructions when he was shot and killed by Officer Jason Van Dyke. Van Dyke was later convicted of second-degree murder for shooting the teen.

The debate about policing was reignited last year after the death of criminal George Floyd while in police custody in Minneapolis in May of 2020.

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Among the “no” votes regarding the new civilian commission was Alderman Nick Sposato from the city’s Northwest Side, who believes there’s enough oversight of the police already.

“We don’t need police reform; we need family reform,” Sposato said. “Families need to take ownership and start watching over their children.” Sposato wore a Chicago Police Department pin, as well as a “Defend the Police” tee-shirt under his suit coat as he defended the police during the meeting.

“You’re going to win, we’re going to lose. The Police Department’s going to lose. The city’s going to lose,” Sposato told his fellow council members.



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The anti-police activists didn't get everything they wanted. For one thing, activists called for the new commission to be able to fire the police superintendent if they thought it was necessary, but that idea couldn't garner the necessary support from aldermen. Instead, all the commission can do is to pass a non-binding "no-confidence" vote if they feel a police superintendent is not up to the job.

Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) President John Catanzara denounced the new commission as a "useless redundancy" and said that Lightfoot has already agreed to a host of new police accountability measures as part of a new eight-year labor contract between the FOP and the city. Lightfoot denies that such an agreement exists.

Catanzara further called the new commission "absolutely absurd and dangerous and reckless" and claimed that it handed power to "the squeaky wheels who made this city into anarchy last summer."

Others claimed that the new commission would make it more difficult for officers to do their jobs and has the potential to make it harder for the city to recruit officers willing to work for the department.

"This new committee, this 12th layer of police oversight, is going to make every potential police officer think about going in another direction," said far Northwest Side Alderman Anthony Napolitano, a former police officer.

Proponents of the new commission believe that it will allow community members to feel as if they have some power when it comes to policing in the city — and, thus, some ownership over the issue.

"This ordinance is predicated on the belief that when you empower our communities, that when you give them a real seat at the table and you give them a real voice, that we can make our policing system better and we can have a safer city in every single neighborhood, on every single street," said Alderman Carlos Ramirez-Rosa.

This is a nice sentiment, but in reality, all this new commission does is add more politicians to the soup that is Chicago's crime problem. Each will be paid a city stipend for serving, each will need to be elected every four years, and each will be beholden to whomever helps them get elected.

It's the typical leftist solution to any problem. When in doubt, add more politicians.



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