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STRATEGIES



SAY THEIR NAMES

HOW A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON SOCIAL JUSTICE
DROVE LEGISLATIVE ACTION AT THE STATE LEVEL

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INTRODUCTION

Online conversation has transformed the public square, particularly around policing issues. How has it encouraged reform?

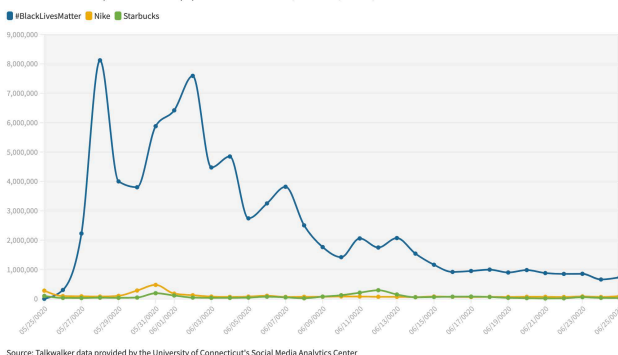
The Summer of 2020 was turbulent, as the nation plunged into an emotionally charged debate over social justice against the backdrop of a deadly pandemic. Protesters took to the streets in cities across the nation to **demonstrate against police brutality** following the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and Breonna Taylor.

But the protests were not confined to the streets. **Legions of Americans also turned to online platforms** to **lend their voice** to the cause of social justice and to demand reforms in police training, arrest procedures, and other law-enforcement policies. The response was remarkable, providing a glimpse of the breadth and depth of public outrage over police misconduct and abuse.

From advocacy resources on Instagram, to editorials on Facebook, to video documents of brutality on Twitter, **it is clear that online conversation has fundamentally transformed the public square.** A July 2020 Pew Research **survey** found that nearly a quarter of respondents said they changed their views on an issue due to social media – with many citing Black Lives Matter and police brutality – while a variety of polls **indicate support for police reform** has grown significantly over the past decade, **particularly** among white Americans.

Dominating the conversation

#BlackLivesMatter eclipsed mentions of popular brands on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, and other sources.



Source: Mashable

Shifts in public opinion around social and racial justice issues occurred as the phrase Black Lives Matter **permeated** social media, a medium where voices **historically excluded** from the national conversation can amplify local events, debates, and issues. In the first month following the police killing of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter was mentioned more than 80 million times on Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, and various blogs – far surpassing the mentions of popular brands like Nike and Starbucks that typically dominate those platforms, according to the University of Connecticut's Social Media Analytics Center.

Thus, there is an open question about how much the **historically high online conversation** about policing in the summer following George Floyd's death will drive legislative action or any other institutional response on the state level. Over the summer, this question was further complicated by

COVID-19, as nearly half of state legislatures were out of session, with many forced to suspend activity due to the pandemic.

This is what we had in mind when we undertook **Say Their Names**, a project that aimed to track and analyze online conversation toward police reform, state-by-state, and then determine the volume and nature of police reform proposed, enacted, or sought by each state's legislature and governor.

To identify relevant legislation in each state, keyword searches were conducted using the legislative aggregation tool **Quorum**, the **National Conference of State Legislatures'** policing state bill tracking database, and various state and local databases. To identify "online conversation" about social justice issues in each state, **Signal Labs' Media Intelligence Cloud** was used to identify the number of nationwide, out-of-state media mentions about social justice issues concerning each state in online media outlets and platforms, including local and national broadcasts and publications, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and forums, among others.

State-level legislative activity occurred following a momentous conversation on social media about local events and the protests, which were the most-searched in the US in Google's history. Concurrently, mainstream news **pivoted** from COVID-19-dominated coverage to stories about the demonstrations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our analysis compared legislative activity on police reform in 50 states and Washington, D.C., to online press and social media activity on social justice issues between May and September 2020. **The aim of this report was to determine whether increased legislative activity on police reform in any given state could be linked to the national online attention that state drew on social justice issues.** Put differently, we set out to determine if local social justice issues that garnered a national focus were more likely to prompt legislative action. We identified any online conversations about each state that included names of victims of police brutality and terms associated with demonstrations, both in the mainstream online press and social media. In short, we wanted to see how states responded when thrust into the national spotlight.

While it is difficult to claim causation, the analysis shows that the volume of nationwide online conversation related to social justice issues in a state correlates to the amount of legislative activity on police reform in that state. In many cases, legislators in states that have generated a large amount of online conversation on social justice issues have introduced a greater number of police reform bills than states that have generated less.

This analysis suggests that though the enactment of state-level police reform may require political will, **the creation of legislation is driven by the volume of nationwide online conversation about social justice issues concerning that state, and that conversation requires a victim's name.**

In the first few months following George Floyd's death, state legislatures considered more than 221 police reform bills or measures and governors took 72 actions – including signing laws, forming task forces, and issuing executive orders. Seven states then held special sessions to consider 98 bills, while governors took an additional 14 actions. Further, through September, lawmakers in the 19 states that have not been in session have released at least 123 reform proposals and drafts, while governors took nine executive actions.

Concurrently, the names George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and Breonna Taylor were shared 48,127,535 times across social media and media publications from May 31, 2020, to September 15, 2020 – shaping the discourse around Black Lives Matter as it grew into one of the largest movements in US history.



INITIAL RESPONSE

STATE LEGISLATURES IN SESSION, MAY 31-JULY 15



TIER 1: STATES WITH 1 MILLION-PLUS MENTIONS EACH INTRODUCED MORE THAN 15 BILLS OR MEASURES

In the top states sorted by social justice mentions¹, legislators introduced a combined total of 110 police reform measures in the immediate months following the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Rayshard Brooks – which occurred in two of these states. The one state in this group with a divided legislature, **Minnesota** (10,091,785 mentions), nevertheless saw the highest number of reform bills put forward – suggesting that **heightened national conversation can overcome partisan split to encourage legislators to take action**. Notably, **Georgia** (2,074,263 mentions), the state with the second highest number of mentions, **flipped** blue for Joe Biden. Prior to 2020, Georgia hadn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1992.

Though **Washington, D.C.** saw only one bill introduction, **the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Act** compiled subtitles for 15 policing policies that were covered by multiple bills in the tier's other four states, including those involving body cameras, civilian review, cultural diversity training, demilitarization, disclosure of misconduct, prosecutorial jurisdiction, use of force, and union reform.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): 1,000,000+ Mentions						
State	Mentions	Bills/Measures	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Minnesota	10,091,785	51	5	Divided	Democrat	Biden
Georgia	2,074,263	18	1	Republican	Republican	Biden (flipped)
New York	1,747,539	26	12	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Washington, D.C.	1,565,771	15	1	Democrat (Council)	Democrat (Mayor)	Biden

TIER 2: STATES WITH 400,000-1 MILLION MENTIONS EACH INTRODUCED MORE THAN 5 BILLS

Five of the states in this tier with around a half-million mentions each saw at least five bill introductions. Sorted by mentions, the three states following California included states under complete Democrat control (Oregon) and complete Republican control (Ohio), as well as one with a divided government (Michigan). California (992,112 mentions) saw nearly twice as many mentions as the other states in this tier. Lawmakers there introduced 11 bills.

This group of states had one outlier. In **Florida** (440,911 mentions), where no bills were introduced, Democratic senators and the Florida Legislative Black Caucus sought a special session on police reform – **seeking to discuss 10 proposals** – but the Senate President rejected those requests. In September, Governor Ron DeSantis **said** that he would make a bill that would increase penalties for those who participate in “violent, disorderly” assemblies – the Combating Violence, Disorder and Looting and Law Enforcement Protection Act – a focal point of the next legislative session. He also threatened to withdraw grants from localities that attempt to defund their police.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): 400,000-1,000,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Bills	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
California	992,112	11	2	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Oregon	606,677	6	8	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Pennsylvania	474,614	5	3	Republican	Democrat	Biden (flipped)
Ohio	448,649	8	10	Republican	Republican	Trump
Florida	440,911	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Michigan	416,887	9	2	Republican	Democrat	Biden (flipped)

¹ In the following report, the terms “social justice mentions” or “mentions” refer to the number of nationwide, out-of-state media mentions about social justice issues concerning each state in online media outlets and platforms, including local and national broadcasts and publications, Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and forums, among others.

TIER 3: MOST STATES WITH LESS THAN 400,000 MENTIONS INTRODUCED FEWER THAN 5 BILLS

In this tier, 15 states introduced fewer than five bills, including six that only introduced one: Colorado, Missouri, Mississippi, Utah, Delaware, and Kansas.

Four states in this tier slightly defy the categorization. **Colorado** (330,947 mentions) saw a relatively high level of mentions but only one bill was introduced – the [Enhance Law Enforcement Integrity Act](#). However, like in Washington, D.C., this comprehensive measure covered [13 policing reform areas](#) considered by this report that other states addressed in multiple bills, including data collection, body cameras, prosecutorial jurisdiction, administrative reform, use of force, and officer intervention.

New Jersey (148,896 mentions) saw about half as many mentions as Colorado, but legislators there introduced 13 bills while the governor and attorney general's office issued six executive actions. Notably, unlike other states, the attorney general in New Jersey has [broad authority to issue statewide policy directives](#), which are binding on all law enforcement agencies and officers in the state. (Additionally, New Jersey has recent experience with law enforcement reform in the face of public safety crises, most notably in [Camden](#).)

Legislators in **Massachusetts** (337,818 mentions) introduced eight bills, including a major reform measure that [passed](#) the Senate in mid-July that, similar to Colorado and Washington, DC, that would enact several reforms – including banning tactics like chokeholds, limiting qualified immunity, and establishing new accountability procedures. The state may have seen a higher number of proposed measures due to bipartisan support from both the Democrat-controlled legislature and Republican Governor Charlie Baker, who has [urged](#) legislators to move forward on police reform.

New Hampshire (26,966 mentions, eight bills) was also an outlier. In the state, which has a [divided government](#), measures may have been [more easily proposed and enacted](#) despite low numbers of mentions due to bipartisan support from both the Democrat-controlled General Court and Republican Governor Chris Sununu.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): < 400,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Bills/Measures	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Massachusetts	337,818	8	1	Democrat	Republican	Biden
Colorado	330,947	13	2	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Missouri	234,587	1	1	Republican	Republican	Trump
Mississippi	229,194	1	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
North Carolina	189,954	3	2	Republican	Democrat	Trump
New Jersey	148,896	13	6	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Iowa	110,311	2	1	Republican	Republican	Trump
Utah	105,703	1	2	Republican	Republican	Trump
South Carolina	90,446	5	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Delaware	90,192	1	1	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
New Mexico	81,545	2	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Tennessee	81,468	2	1	Republican	Republican	Trump
Louisiana	76,243	2	0	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Kansas	49,620	1	1	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Rhode Island	32,427	3	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Hawaii	32,209	2	0	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
New Hampshire	26,966	8	2	Democrat	Republican	Biden
Vermont	19,525	4	2	Democrat	Republican	Biden

SPECIAL SESSIONS ON POLICE REFORM

JULY-SEPTEMBER

SIX GOVERNORS CALLED SPECIAL SESSIONS ON POLICE REFORM IN HIGH-MENTION STATES

Following the initial two months of legislative response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, six states called special sessions over the summer to explicitly address police reform, while one state considered a police reform bill in a session on COVID-19-related issues. **Three of these six states saw more than 1.5 million mentions by the time the sessions began.**

Some states covered multiple areas of reform in single bills that were signed into law – such as Minnesota's [HF 1](#) and Connecticut's [HB 6004](#) – while others took notable action on one key area of reform, such as Oregon with [HB 4301](#), which prohibits the use of chokeholds by law enforcement officers.

In **Virginia** (523,436 mentions), the General Assembly has considered at least 48 reform bills during its special session, which began August 18 and continued through September. Notably, on September 10, the Senate passed [SB 5030](#), an omnibus bill containing many measures included in other reform bills.

Two states did not translate proposals in special sessions into action. In **Wisconsin** (1,546,145 mentions), though Governor Tony Evers called the legislature to consider nine measures following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, the Republican-controlled chambers [stopped the “skeletal session” after 30 seconds](#). (Additionally, Republican State Senator Van Wanggaard [unveiled](#) a package of eight police reform proposals shortly before the session, three of which were modified versions of the governor's proposals.)

In **Tennessee** (92,737 mentions), though the General Assembly met to address budget and COVID-19 related issues, it considered one police reform measure, [HB 8010/SB 8012](#), which would require law enforcement officers to clearly identify themselves as officers or agents when arresting a person during a protest.

Special Sessions on Police Reform: July-September 2020

State	Mentions by Session Commencement	Bills	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Minnesota	10,012,325 (7/13)	18	2	Divided	Democrat	Biden
Oregon	3,038,749 (8/10)	11	2	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Wisconsin	1,546,145 (8/31)	17	1	Republican	Democrat	Biden (flipped)
Virginia	523,436 (8/18)	48	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Nevada	270,475 (7/31)	2	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Connecticut	192,452 (7/21)	1	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Tennessee	92,737 (8/10)	1	0	Republican	Republican	Trump

LAWMAKERS IN OUT-OF-SESSION, HIGH-MENTION STATES SOUGHT A SPECIAL SESSION ON REFORM

For the states that did not call special sessions to address police reform, there was a corresponding correlation between records of lawmakers requesting or seeking one and the volume of mentions. Namely, **legislators in seven of the top 10 states not in session sorted by mentions publicly requested the governor call a session** to consider police reform measures. Washington is a notable outlier, where there is support for reform despite a special session being reported as **unlikely** – lawmakers are working on a number of proposals which **may be considered in January**.

No records were found of lawmaker requests for special sessions on police reform in the bottom ten states (less than 150,000 mentions).

Potential Special Sessions on Police Reform					
State	Mentions	Record of Lawmaker Request	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Kentucky	7,687,845	Yes	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Washington	2,380,639	No	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Illinois	1,322,116	Yes	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Texas	943,204	Yes	Republican	Republican	Trump
Oklahoma	380,872	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
Nebraska	364,160	Yes	N/A ³	Republican	Trump
Maryland	358,735	Yes	Democrat	Republican	Biden
Arizona	326,632	Yes	Republican	Republican	Biden (flipped)
Indiana	224,105	Yes	Republican	Republican	Trump
Alaska	145,765	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
Arkansas	134,185	No	Republican ⁴	Republican	Trump
Alabama	121,706	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
West Virginia	67,203	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
Idaho	59,798	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
Maine	56,431	No	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
South Dakota	53,883	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
Montana	49,661	No	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Wyoming	18,661	No	Republican	Republican	Trump
North Dakota	17,063	No	Republican	Republican	Trump

³ Nebraska has a **unicameral, non-partisan legislature**: Republicans technically maintain trifecta control.

⁴ Alaska's **status** is considered by BallotPedia as a divided government, as Republicans did not organize a majority in the House.

PENDING REFORM

STATE LEGISLATURES OUT-OF-SESSION, MAY 31-SEPTEMBER 15

TIER 1: TWO STATES OUT-OF-SESSION WITH 1 MILLION+ MENTIONS PROPOSED AT LEAST 12 MEASURES

In this tier, lawmakers in two states have said they would introduce a number of reform proposals. In Illinois (1,322,116 mentions, 16 proposals), though several Democrats **sought a special session** on police reform, none was called; several lawmakers reportedly plan to **propose legislation** in the fall veto session this November and December. In **Washington** (2,380,639 mentions, 12 proposals), though Governor Jay Inslee **voiced support** for reform, he did not order a session to address measures proposed by lawmakers. This may be due to his **formation of a task force** to provide recommendations for reforms, which will meet through the fall.

Kentucky (7,687,845 mentions) is a notable outlier in this group. Despite the state seeing the largest number of mentions in this tier, lawmakers have released few proposals publicly. **This may be due in part to the national conversation's focus on reforms in Louisville**, where on September 15, as part of its resolution of a civil lawsuit with the estate of Breonna Taylor, the city **agreed** to a package of nine reforms, including to adopt community-related police programs and search warrant reforms.

Notably, following the settlement, Kentucky's House Minority Leader Joni Jenkins (D-44) highlighted that many reforms lawmakers have discussed for a future legislative session **were passed by the Louisville ordinance**.

State Legislatures Out-of-Session (May 31-Sept 15): 1,000,000+ Mentions						
State	Mentions	Proposals	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Kentucky	7,687,845	2	1	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Washington	2,380,639	12	1	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Illinois	1,322,116	16	1	Democrat	Democrat	Biden

TIER 2: STATES WITH 100,000-1,000,000 MENTIONS PUT FORWARD VARYING NUMBERS OF PROPOSALS

This tier saw more mixed results, with no records found of reform proposals in two states (Alaska and Arkansas) and moderate numbers of proposals in four (Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, and Alabama).

Two states saw high numbers of proposals. In **Maryland** (358,735 mentions), the Senate Judicial Proceedings [Committee issued](#) a package of 15 reforms, while in **Indiana** (224,105 mentions), the Black Legislative Caucus [introduced](#) a justice reform policy agenda that includes at least 42 proposals for next year's session.

State Legislatures Out-of-Session (May 31-Sept 15): 100,000-1,000,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Proposals	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Texas	943,204	6	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Oklahoma	380,872	9	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Nebraska	364,160	7 ⁵	1	N/A ⁶	Republican	Trump
Maryland	358,735	15	0	Democrat	Republican	Biden
Arizona	326,632	5	0	Republican	Republican	Biden (flipped)
Indiana	224,105	42	3	Republican	Republican	Trump
Alaska	145,765	0	0	Republican ⁷	Republican	Trump
Arkansas	134,185	0	2	Republican	Republican	Trump
Alabama	121,706	7	0	Republican	Republican	Trump

TIER 3: STATES WITH LESS THAN 100,000 MENTIONS PUT FORWARD MINIMAL-TO-NO PROPOSALS

In this tier, with the exception of Montana (49,661 mentions), the seven states with legislatures out of session that had less than 100,000 mentions put forward almost no reform proposals, while governors took no executive actions and did not call special sessions to address law enforcement policies. In Montana – the sole state from this group with a divided government – records were found of only one lawmaker filing bill drafts.

State Legislatures Out-of-Session (May 31-Sept 15): <100,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Proposals	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
West Virginia	67,203	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Idaho	59,798	0 ⁸	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Maine	56,431	0	0	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
South Dakota	53,883	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Montana	49,661	2	0	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Wyoming	18,661	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
North Dakota	17,063	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump

⁵ Nebraska held its [second session](#) of the legislature in late July, after the period of this report's study of the immediate response to police violence.

⁶ Nebraska has a [unicameral, non-partisan legislature](#): Republicans technically maintain trifecta control.

⁷ Alaska's [status](#) is considered by BallotPedia as a divided government, as Republicans did not organize a majority in the House.

⁸ Idaho held a [three-day special session](#) in August to pass COVID-19 legislation; police reform was not addressed.

BACKGROUND

INITIAL RESPONSE (MAY-JULY)

Our analysis first focused on the immediate response by the 27 states with legislatures in-session from May 31 to July 15, as well as the District of Columbia. The analysis also reviewed bills introduced in special sessions called during that time period to address police reform.

1 MILLION-PLUS MENTIONS (MAY 31-JULY 15)

In the top states sorted by mentions, legislators introduced a combined total of 110 police reform measures in the immediate months following the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Rayshard Brooks – which occurred in two of these states. Each of these states introduced at least 15 measures, and reform was enacted in all but Georgia.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): 1,000,000+ Mentions						
State	Mentions	Bills/Measures	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Minnesota	10,091,785	51	5	Divided	Democrat	Biden
Georgia	2,074,263	18	1	Republican	Republican	Biden (flipped)
New York	1,747,539	26	12	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Washington, D.C.	1,565,771	15	1	Democrat (Council)	Democrat (Mayor)	Biden



MINNESOTA

The one state in this group that has a divided legislature, Minnesota nevertheless saw the highest number of reform bills put forward – perhaps evident given the mainstream media spotlight on the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. This may suggest that heightened media activity on social justice issues is capable of overcoming a partisan split in state governments to encourage legislators to take action.

10,091,785 MENTIONS
51 BILLS
5 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

In addition to a flurry of legislative proposals introduced in the legislature's regular session, Governor Tim Walz called two [special sessions](#) to address police accountability and reform. His administration's Department of Human Rights also launched an [investigation](#) into the Minneapolis Police Department after filing a [civil rights charge](#) related to the death of George Floyd; a few days later, Minneapolis agreed to implement structural changes and joined the DHR in submitting the court order.

Walz also joined House and Senate leaders in announcing a [set of police accountability and reform legislative priorities](#), including on use of force, alternatives to policing, oversight reform, voting restoration, community healing, independent prosecution and investigation reform, training expansion, and a prohibition on warrior training and chokeholds. (Walz notably [signed](#) the Minnesota Police Accountability Act on July 23.)

Joe Biden [won](#) Minnesota in the 2020 presidential election.



2,074,263 MENTIONS
18 BILLS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

GEORGIA

In Georgia, the site of the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Rayshard Brooks, a high level of mentions is similarly correlated with a large volume of legislative activity. However, this did not translate to the enactment of reforms – perhaps due in part to the political will of its government, which is under single-party control.

Governor Brian Kemp did not take a proportionally high level of reform action during the examined period, but [signed a bill in August](#) that would create a November ballot referendum on abolishing the Glynn County Police Department (which was later [nullified](#) by a Superior Court Judge) as well as a [hate crime bill](#) in June. He also signed a so-called “[Police Bill of Rights](#)” law opposed by civil rights groups that added protections for first responders; opponents [argued](#) it would taint the recently approved hate crime law.

Georgia flipped blue in the 2020 presidential election, with Joe Biden [winning](#) by less than one percentage point. Prior to 2020, Georgia hadn't voted for a Democratic presidential candidate since 1992.



1,747,539 MENTIONS
26 BILLS
12 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

NEW YORK

In New York, a high number of social justice mentions combined with a volley of legislative activity and political will translated to the enactment of reform. Governor Andrew Cuomo signed 10 reform bills into law, including [measures](#) requiring officers to wear body cameras on patrol and creating the Law Enforcement Misconduct Investigative office; [two bills](#) on data collection and one requiring officers to provide medical and mental health attention to individuals in custody; a bill affirming the right of an individual to [record](#) law enforcement activity; and a [four-bill “Say Their Name” reform package](#).

Cuomo also signed an [executive order](#) establishing the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative and [requested](#) Attorney General Letitia James include officer actions during protests in her review of actions and procedures.

Joe Biden [won](#) New York in the 2020 presidential election.



1,565,771 MENTIONS
15 MEASURES
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

WASHINGTON, DC

Though Washington, D.C., saw only one bill introduction during the examined period – [the Comprehensive Policing and Justice Reform Act](#) – this single bill included 15 subtitles that overhauled a number of policing policies that were covered by multiple bills in the tier's other four states. These included measures on body cameras, civilian review, cultural diversity training, demilitarization, disclosure of misconduct, prosecutorial jurisdiction, use of force, and union reform, among others.

Mayor Muriel Bowser [signed](#) this bill on July 22; due to its close proximity to the examined period of study, it was included in the analysis.

Joe Biden [won](#) Washington, DC, in the 2020 presidential election.

400,000-1 MILLION MENTIONS (MAY 31-JULY 15)

Five of the states in this tier with around a half-million mentions each saw at least five bill introductions. Sorted by mentions, the three states following California included states under Democrat (Oregon) and Republican (Ohio) trifecta control, as well as one with a divided government (Michigan). California saw nearly twice as many mentions: lawmakers there introduced 11 bills.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): 400,000-1,000,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Bills	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
California	992,112	11	2	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Oregon	606,677	6	8	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Pennsylvania	474,614	5	3	Republican	Democrat	Biden (flipped)
Ohio	448,649	8	10	Republican	Republican	Trump
Florida	440,911	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Michigan	416,887	9	2	Republican	Democrat	Biden (flipped)



CALIFORNIA

Coming in at slightly under one million mentions, California saw 11 bill introductions in its Democrat-controlled legislature. A number of these bills were [sent](#) to Governor Gavin Newsom's desk in September.

From May through July, Newsom took a number of executive actions as the legislature considered potential laws. Newsom announced a [set of new policing and criminal justice reforms](#) to build on the state's 2019 enactment of a strong standard for police use of deadly force – including ending the carotid hold and creating new standards for crowd control in protests. He also launched a [police reform task force](#).

Joe Biden [won](#) California in the 2020 presidential election.

992,112 MENTIONS
11 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



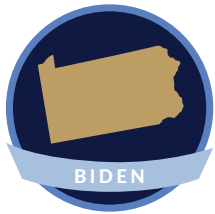
OREGON

A high volume of media activity and legislative action combined with political will led to a number of enacted reforms in Oregon, where Governor Kate Brown [established](#) a Public Safety Training and Standards Task Force and [called](#) a special session of the legislature.

Brown signed [all six reform bills introduced during the session](#), including those pertaining to arbitration ([SB 1604](#)), prohibiting the use of tear gas for purposes of crowd control ([HB 4208](#)), establishing new standards for online databases of disciplinary records ([HB 4207](#)), requiring officer intervention ([HB 4205](#)), curtailing use of force ([HB 4203](#)), and creating a Joint Committee on Transparent Policing and Use of Force Reform ([HB 4201](#)).

Joe Biden [won](#) Oregon in the 2020 presidential election.

606,677 MENTIONS
6 BILLS
8 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



474,614 MENTIONS
5 BILLS
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

PENNSYLVANIA

Despite the partisan split in its government, Pennsylvania enacted a number of police reforms. In the period of this report's study, Governor Tom Wolf [signed](#) the state's first two reform bills: HB 1841 and HB 1910, which instituted new background checks for law enforcement applicants and required mental health evaluations for officers, respectively.

Wolf also [proposed](#) a package of reforms based on the 21st Century Policing Task Force created under President Obama, including creating a Deputy Inspector General and a Racial and Ethnic Disparities Subcommittee, as well as reviewing training and education of officers. (He signed an [executive order](#) creating the Pennsylvania State Law Enforcement Citizen Advisory Commission on July 17.)

Pennsylvania flipped blue in the 2020 presidential election, with Biden [winning](#) after weeks of vote counting and several failed legal challenges by Donald Trump. In 2016, President Trump was the first Republican candidate to [win](#) Pennsylvania since 1988.



448,649 MENTIONS
8 BILLS
10 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

OHIO

At nearly half a million mentions, Ohio's Republican-controlled government pursued and enacted several reform measures. Governor Mike DeWine took a number of actions, including [directing](#) the state's Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board to develop uniform minimum standards related to mass protests and creating an Office of Law Enforcement Recruitment aimed at increasing representation of minority groups and women in the profession.

DeWine also joined Attorney General Yost in [outlining](#) a multi-tiered plan to improve training, transparency, and accountability – including developing new processes to conduct independent investigations after an officer-involved shooting, building databases for use-of-force incidents, and directing cabinet-level agencies that possess law enforcement authority to examine use of force policies.

Donald Trump won Ohio in the 2020 presidential election.



FLORIDA

This group of states saw one outlier. In Florida, where no bills were introduced, Democratic senators and the Florida Legislative Black Caucus sought a special session on police reform – including to discuss 10 proposals – but the Senate President rejected those requests. Notably, opposition from law enforcement groups and police unions, including the Florida Police Chiefs Association, has reportedly made it difficult to pass police reform legislation in the state.

Governor Ron DeSantis did not take executive action on reform. In September, DeSantis said that he would make the Combating Violence, Disorder and Looting and Law Enforcement Protection Act a focal point of the next legislative session – a bill that would increase penalties for those who participate in “violent, disorderly” assemblies. He also threatened to withdraw grants from localities that attempt to defund their police.

Donald Trump won Florida in the 2020 presidential election.



MICHIGAN

In Michigan – which has a divided government – the Republican legislature proposed a number of reform bills; Democrat Governor Gretchen Whitmer took two key executive actions as those bills went through the legislative process. Whitmer signed an executive order to reorganize the state’s Commission on Law Enforcement Standards, and proposed reforms in four areas: policy, personnel, partnership/community engagement, and prevention & accountability.

Michigan flipped blue in the 2020 presidential election, with Joe Biden winning by less than three percentage points.

440,911 MENTIONS
0 BILLS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

416,887 MENTIONS
9 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

100,000-400,000 MENTIONS (MAY 31-JULY 15)

Six states in this group introduced minimal bills, including four that only introduced one: Colorado, Missouri, Mississippi, and Utah. Iowa similarly saw only two bill introductions. Those states are notably under single-party trifecta control, with Republicans holding both the governor's office and legislature in all but Colorado. Governors and attorneys general in these states also took a few executive actions to address reform.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): 100,000-400,000 Mentions

State	Mentions	Bills/Measures	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Massachusetts	337,818	8	1	Democrat	Republican	Biden
Colorado	330,947	13	2	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Missouri	234,587	1	1	Republican	Republican	Trump
Mississippi	229,194	1	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
North Carolina	189,954	3	2	Republican	Democrat	Trump
New Jersey	148,896	13	6	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Iowa	110,311	2	1	Republican	Republican	Trump
Utah	105,703	1	2	Republican	Republican	Trump



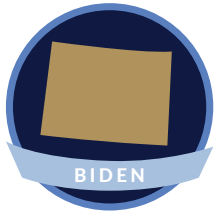
MASSACHUSETTS

Despite belonging to a group of states that saw few police reform measures proposed, Massachusetts is a slight outlier. State legislators introduced eight bills, including a major reform measure that **passed** the Senate in mid-July that, similar to Colorado and Washington, DC, would enact several reforms – including banning tactics like chokeholds, limiting qualified immunity, and establishing new accountability procedures.

Massachusetts may have seen a higher number of proposed measures due to bipartisan support from both the Democrat-controlled legislature and Republican Governor Charlie Baker, who has **urged** legislators to move forward on police reform. Additionally, the Baker-Polito administration **filed** An Act To Improve Police Officer Standards And Accountability and to Improve Training, which would require officers in the state to be certified. The bill would also allow for decertification, suspension of certification, or reprimand in the event of certain misconduct.

Joe Biden **won** Massachusetts in the 2020 presidential election.

337,818 MENTIONS
8 BILLS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION



330,947 MENTIONS
13 MEASURES
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

COLORADO

Colorado saw a relatively high level of mentions but only one bill was introduced – the [Enhance Law Enforcement Integrity Act](#). However, like in Washington, D.C., this comprehensive measure covered [13 policing reform areas](#) considered by this report that other states addressed in multiple bills, including data collection, body cameras, prosecutorial jurisdiction, administrative reform, use of force, and officer intervention.

Governor Jared Polis signed this bill ([SB20-217](#)) into law; he also signed an [executive order](#) appointing the attorney general as the state's prosecutor to investigate the death of Elijah McClain.

Joe Biden [won](#) Colorado in the 2020 presidential election.



234,587 MENTIONS
1 BILL
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

MISSOURI

Limited reforms were proposed or enacted in Missouri. Governor Mike Parson [called](#) a special session to focus on addressing violent crime (including loosening residency restrictions for officers), and said he wants to [wait until next year](#) to address police reform.

Donald Trump [won](#) Missouri in the 2020 presidential election.



229,194 MENTIONS
1 BILL
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

MISSISSIPPI

Limited reforms were proposed in Mississippi, where Governor Tate Reeves took no significant action.

Donald Trump won Mississippi in the 2020 presidential election.



189,954 MENTIONS
3 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

NORTH CAROLINA

In North Carolina, where the Republican legislature has [frequently been at odds](#) with Democrat Governor Roy Cooper, few actions were proposed or enacted. Cooper signed an [executive order](#) creating a task force to investigate solutions to stop discriminatory law enforcement and criminal justice practices, as well as hold public safety officers accountable.

Cooper also notably [vetoed](#) SB 168, an agency bill that included a provision that would have reportedly limited transparency for records pertaining to deaths that occur in law enforcement custody. (This provision was notably [added](#) by lawmakers late in the session's final night.)

Donald Trump [won](#) North Carolina in the 2020 presidential election.



148,896 MENTIONS
13 BILLS
6 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

NEW JERSEY

Another outlier in this group of states, New Jersey saw about half as many mentions as Colorado, but legislators there introduced 13 bills. Notably, unlike other states, New Jersey's attorney general has [broad authority to issue statewide policy directives](#), which are binding on all law enforcement agencies and officers in the state. (Additionally, New Jersey has recent experience with law enforcement reform in the face of public safety crises, most notably in [Camden](#).)

Governor Phil Murphy and Attorney General Gurbir Grewal announced a package of [five reforms](#) as an outgrowth of the administration's "Excellence in Policing" initiative, including expanding crisis intervention training, endorsing statewide certification for police officers, creating a use of force portal, updating use of force policy, and creating a Division on Civil Rights Incident Response Team.

Additionally, Grewal issued a [statewide order](#) requiring law enforcement agencies to identify officers who commit serious disciplinary violations; he also issued [guidance](#) prohibiting all New Jersey law enforcement officers from using chokeholds and carotid artery neck restraints. (The New Jersey Police Training Commission, which Grewal chairs, also [voted](#) unanimously in support of creating a statewide police licensing program, as well as to overhaul statewide training programs.)

Murphy also [signed a bill](#) that requires law enforcement agencies to provide internal affairs and personnel files of law enforcement officers to other agencies under certain circumstances.

Joe Biden [won](#) New Jersey in the 2020 presidential election.



110,311 MENTIONS
2 BILLS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

IOWA

Though few bills were proposed in Iowa, Governor Kim Reynolds [signed](#) HF 2647 into law. The bill bans most police chokeholds, makes it illegal to rehire police fired for misconduct, and allows the attorney general to investigate police misconduct.

Donald Trump [won](#) Iowa in the 2020 presidential election.



105,703 MENTIONS
1 BILL/MEASURE
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

UTAH

Governor Gary Herbert signed [HB 5007](#) into law, which bans police from using chokehold tactics. Herbert, who is in his final months as governor, also [directed](#) his public safety commissioner to author a report recommending ways to decrease fear and anger of police in under-represented communities, as well as ways to increase police transparency.

Donald Trump [won](#) Utah in the 2020 presidential election.

LESS THAN 100,000 MENTIONS (MAY 31-JULY 15)

In a similar trend with the states that saw between 100,000 and 400,000 mentions, the 10 states in-session with the lowest numbers of mentions introduced few reform bills. Four states in this group have divided governments; notably, there were minimal differences between the number of bills introduced between the states where Republicans and Democrats maintain trifecta control. Governors and attorneys general in these states also took few executive actions to address reform.

State Legislatures In-Session (May 31-July 15): < 100,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Bills	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
South Carolina	90,446	5	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Delaware	90,192	1	1	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
New Mexico	81,545	2	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Tennessee	81,468	2	1	Republican	Republican	Trump
Louisiana	76,243	2	0	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Kansas	49,620	1	1	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Rhode Island	32,427	3	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Hawaii	32,209	2	0	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
New Hampshire	26,966	8	2	Democrat	Republican	Trump
Vermont	19,525	4	2	Democrat	Republican	Biden



SOUTH CAROLINA

Limited reforms were proposed or enacted in South Carolina, where Governor Henry McMaster took no significant action.

90,446 MENTIONS
5 BILLS

0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

Donald Trump **won** South Carolina in the 2020 presidential election.



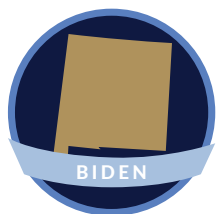
DELAWARE

In Delaware, where Democrats hold both the legislature and governor's office, minimal reform actions were pursued. Governor John Carney signed an **executive order** that enacted a number of reforms, including banning chokeholds, directing DSP to increase its community outreach, instituting implicit bias training and de-escalation training, and increasing crisis intervention services.

90,192 MENTIONS
1 BILL

1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

Joe Biden **won** Delaware in the 2020 presidential election.



81,545 MENTIONS
2 BILLS
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

NEW MEXICO

Though few bills were filed in New Mexico, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham [called a special session](#) of the legislature to address police reform, among other issue areas. She later signed two bills, including [SB 8](#), which requires officers to wear body cameras, establishes strengthened accountability measures, and creates the Law Enforcement Academy Board. She also signed [HB 5](#), which established the New Mexico Civil Rights Commission – a body that will review the use of qualified immunity as a defense to liability by an employee of a public body, and deliver a report by November 15.

Joe Biden [won](#) New Mexico in the 2020 presidential election.



81,468 MENTIONS
2 BILLS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

TENNESSEE

Though few bills were filed in Tennessee, Governor Bill Lee announced a [law enforcement reform partnership](#) with a number of state agencies designed to develop and update policies surrounding use of force, duty to intervene, information sharing, and training.

Donald Trump [won](#) Tennessee in the 2020 presidential election.

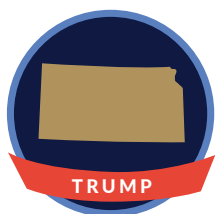


76,243 MENTION
2 BILLS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

LOUISIANA

Governor John Bel Edwards did not take executive action, but rather said the state should consider police reforms in [next year's legislative session](#). (Edwards, whose family has roots in law enforcement, [lauded](#) the peaceful nature of protests in Louisiana while decrying calls to defund the police and touting criminal justice reforms that passed in 2017.)

Donald Trump won Louisiana in the 2020 presidential election



49,620 MENTIONS
1 BILL
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

KANSAS

Governor Laura Kelly signed an [executive order](#) establishing the Governor's Commission on Racial Equity and Justice, which will begin its work focusing on law enforcement-community relations.

Donald Trump [won](#) Kansas in the 2020 presidential election.



RHODE ISLAND

In Rhode Island, where Democrats hold the legislature and governor's office, a moderate number of reform initiatives and bills were put forward.

Notably, as part of her Rise Together program, Governor Gina Raimondo [directed](#) the state police to form a community outreach team, as well as to develop a plan to equip all state police officers with body cameras. Attorney General Peter Neronha also issued [updated and expanded protocol](#) for the review of use of force by state and municipal law enforcement agencies.

Joe Biden [won](#) Rhode Island in the 2020 presidential election.

32,427 MENTION
3 BILLS
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



HAWAII

Though Governor David Ige did not take action during the period of this report's study, in early September, he [said](#) he would allow a bill into law mandating the disclosure of identities of county police officers who have been fired or suspended.

Joe Biden [won](#) Hawaii in the 2020 presidential election.

32,209 MENTIONS
2 BILLS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire is a notable outlier in this group, which saw a number of reform proposals put forward. In the state, which has a divided government, measures may have been [more easily proposed and enacted](#) despite low numbers of mentions due to bipartisan support from both the Democrat-controlled General Court and Republican Governor Chris Sununu.

Notably, Sununu signed an [executive order](#) establishing a state Commission on Law Enforcement Accountability, Community and Transparency. He also [signed](#) a comprehensive criminal justice reform bill into law that prohibits the use of chokeholds and requires police officers to report misconduct.

Joe Biden won New Hampshire in the 2020 presidential election.

26,966 MENTIONS
8 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



VERMONT

Despite having a [divided government](#) and the lowest number of mentions of the states that had legislatures in sessions, Vermont saw several reform proposals put forward and enacted. Most notably, Governor Phil Scott signed [S. 219](#) – a law that requires police to wear body cameras and prohibits the use of chokeholds and other restraint techniques. He also issued an [executive order](#) to form a state Racial Equity Task Force.

Joe Biden [won](#) Vermont in the 2020 presidential election.

19,525 MENTIONS
4 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

BACKGROUND

SPECIAL SESSIONS (JULY-SEPTEMBER)

Following the initial response by state legislatures in-session, and as the volume of nationwide media activity increased through the summer, seven states called their first or second special sessions in July and August 2020 in which police reform was addressed. A variety of reform bills were introduced during these sessions, and in several instances, these bills were signed into law.⁹

Special Sessions on Police Reform: July-September 2020

State	Mentions by Session Commencement	Bills	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Minnesota	10,012,325 (7/13)	18	2	Divided	Democrat	Biden
Oregon	3,038,749 (8/10)	11	2	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Wisconsin	1,546,145 (8/31)	17	1	Republican	Democrat	Biden (flipped)
Virginia	523,436 (8/18)	48	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Nevada	270,475 (7/31)	2	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Connecticut	192,452 (7/21)	1	3	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Tennessee	92,737 (8/10)	1	0	Republican	Republican	Trump



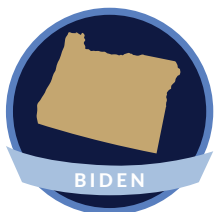
MINNESOTA

Governor Tim Walz signed a [proclamation](#) calling a special session of the legislature to address police reform on July 13th. Lawmakers put forward 18 [reform bills](#) during this session, which convened [through July 20](#). Walz [signed](#) one of these bills ([HF 1](#), the Minnesota Police Accountability Act) into law. The bills includes a ban on warrior training and chokeholds, arbitration reform, officer intervention, mental health training, the creation of a new advisory council with citizen voices, and use of force reform.

Joe Biden [won](#) Minnesota in the 2020 presidential election.

10,012,325 MENTIONS
18 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

⁹ [Utah](#) and [Idaho](#) called special sessions during this period to address COVID-19 and budget-related issues, but police reform measures were not considered. Though Tennessee did not call a special session to explicitly address police reform, one bill was nevertheless considered.



OREGON

Governor Kate Brown called a [second special session](#) of the legislature to address a number of issues, including police reform. Building on their work during the first special session on police reform, Oregon lawmakers authored at least [11 drafts](#) of reform bills prior to the second session, which was held from [August 10 to August 13](#). While many of these measures are reportedly going to be considered in 2021, only [one was introduced \(HB 4301\)](#), but it passed and was signed into law. The bill prohibits the use of chokeholds by law enforcement officers even in situations where the officer may otherwise use deadly physical force.

Joe Biden [won](#) Oregon in the 2020 presidential election.

3,038,749 MENTIONS
11 BILLS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



WISCONSIN

Though Governor Tony Evers called the legislature in for a special session following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, no bills were considered, as the Republican-controlled chambers [stopped the “skeletal session” after 30 seconds](#) on August 31st. (Evers reportedly sought consideration of [nine bills](#), including measures on statewide use of force standards, de-escalation training, a chokehold ban, data collection, and a ban on no-knock warrants, among other measures. Additionally, Republican State Senator Van Wanggaard [unveiled](#) a package of eight police reform proposals shortly before the session, three of which were modified versions of the governor’s proposals.)

Wisconsin flipped blue in the 2020 presidential election, with Joe Biden [winning](#) following a partial recount.

1,546,145 MENTIONS
17 BILLS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION



VIRGINIA

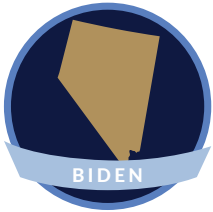
Governor Ralph Northam [called](#) the General Assembly into a special session to address budget issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic as well as criminal justice and policing reform. He also [directed](#) a number of state agencies to assist his administration in developing reform policy initiatives, and [expanded the mission and extended the term](#) of the Commission to Examine Racial Inequity.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, the General Assembly has considered at least 48 reform bills during its special session, which began August 18 and continued through September.¹⁰ These included measures on body cameras, demilitarization, crisis intervention training, officer misconduct, prosecutorial jurisdiction, and use of neck restraints. In September, the Senate passed [SB 5030](#), an omnibus bill containing many measures included in other reform proposals.

Joe Biden [won](#) Virginia in the 2020 presidential election.

523,436 MENTIONS
48 BILLS
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

¹⁰ Though the NCSL’s database identified 61 police reform bills filed during Virginia’s special session, 13 of those bills covered policy not considered by this report’s study on police reform, including increasing felony penalties for assaults on officers, school security officers, and collective bargaining, among others.



NEVADA

Governor Steve Sisolak issued a [proclamation](#) on July 30 to call the Nevada Legislature into its 32nd special session to address a number of agenda items, including criminal and social justice policy reform. He signed into law both reform bills that were introduced into law ([AB 3](#) and [SB 2](#)). The measures covered a number of areas, including prohibiting chokeholds, requiring officer intervention, and data collection.

Though the session convened from [July 31 to August 6](#), an additional [nine reform bill drafts or draft requests](#) were filed in those months, including for measures that would govern the use of body cameras and training. These were not introduced or heard [during the session](#).

Joe Biden [won](#) Nevada in the 2020 presidential election.

270,475 MENTIONS
2 BILLS
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



CONNECTICUT

Lawmakers considered one bill, An Act Concerning Police Accountability ([HB 6004](#)), during the legislature's special session, which convened from [July 21 to July 27](#). [Signed into law](#) by Governor Ned Lamont, the bill restructures the states Police Officer Standards and Training Council, allows cities and town to create civilian review boards with subpoena powers, makes body and dashboard cameras mandatory, and creates a new Independent Office of the Inspector General to conduct use of force investigations, among other reforms. Notably, Senate Democrats [reportedly proposed more than 30 reforms](#) in the lead-up to the session – these may be considered in 2021.

In addition to issuing the [proclamation](#) calling the General Assembly into a special session, Lamont also signed an [executive order](#) taking several actions to reform police strategies and programs in the state, including banning chokeholds and prohibiting the purchase of military and military-style equipment from the federal government.

Joe Biden [won](#) Connecticut in the 2020 presidential election.

192,452 MENTIONS
1 BILL
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



TENNESSEE

Though the General Assembly met to address COVID-19-related issues, it considered one police reform measure in a special session it held during this period, which convened from [August 10 to August 13](#). [HB 8010/SB 8012](#), which failed, would require law enforcement officers to clearly identify themselves as officers or agents when arresting a person during a protest or demonstration.

Donald Trump [won](#) Tennessee in the 2020 presidential election.

92,737 MENTIONS
1 BILL
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

BACKGROUND

PENDING REFORM (MAY-SEPTEMBER)

Nineteen states did not have legislatures in session over the summer. Despite this, lawmakers proposed a number of reform areas (and, in some instances, issued or pre-filed bill drafts). Many governors in these states also took executive action to address police reform, despite not calling legislatures into session or signing bills into law.

1 MILLION-PLUS MENTIONS (MAY 31-SEPTEMBER 15)

Other than Kentucky, the two states with more than 1,000,000 mentions saw at least a dozen reform proposals, as lawmakers sought a special session of the legislature to address bills or potential reform measures. Kentucky saw the largest number of mentions – similar to Minnesota, this is likely attributable to the state being the site of Breonna Taylor’s murder – and lawmakers there are [reportedly](#) considering a number of measures, despite few proposals being released publicly.

Despite the variety of proposals put forward, governors in these states took limited or measured actions.

State Legislatures Out-of-Session (May 31-Sept 15): 1,000,000+ Mentions						
State	Mentions	Proposals	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Kentucky	7,687,845	2	1	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Washington	2,380,639	12	1	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
Illinois	1,322,116	16	1	Democrat	Democrat	Biden



KENTUCKY

Kentucky has been the center of a large volume of national conversation. However, limited reform actions have been pursued at the state level. Notably, on September 15, as part of its resolution of a civil lawsuit with the estate of Breonna Taylor, the Louisville Metro Government [agreed](#) to a package of nine reforms, including to adopt community-related police programs, search warrant reforms, and accountability reforms. Following the settlement, Kentucky’s House Minority Leader Joni Jenkins (D-44) highlighted that many reforms lawmakers have discussed for a future legislative session [were passed by this ordinance](#).

Governor Andy Beshear, who has [said he is open to statewide police reform](#), took one significant executive action over the summer: announcing [additional training](#) for police officers to combat bias and use of force. He has [met with stakeholders and police groups](#) as he has considered calling a special session of the legislature, and met with Breonna Taylor’s mother in June while [voicing support](#) for demonstrators’ “demand for truly equal treatment under the law and an end to injustices that permeate almost every part of our society.”

Beshear also notably [praised](#) the Historic Properties Advisory Commission’s vote to remove the Jefferson Davis statue from the state Capitol Rotunda and signed an [executive order](#) ensuring non-discrimination in state hiring, services, and contracting.

While Republican State Senate leaders have [pushed](#) for a special session on police reform, as of September 11th, Kentucky’s Legislative Black Caucus reportedly remained [undecided](#) on whether to call one. Governor Andy Beshear has [said](#) he is willing to do so, but wants lawmakers to agree on a plan beforehand. On the legislative front, Representative Attica Scott pre-filed a bill request ([BR 22](#)) to ban the use of no-knock search warrants across the state. Senate President Robert Stivers [proposed](#) a similar bill.

Donald Trump [won](#) Kentucky in the 2020 presidential election.

7,687,845 MENTIONS
2 PROPOSALS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION



2,380,639 MENTIONS
12 PROPOSALS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

WASHINGTON

No records were found of overt calls from lawmakers for a special session to address reform, which has been reported as [unlikely](#). Legislators [have proposed](#) at least 12 reforms, including surrounding demilitarization, banning chokeholds, officer intervention, making misconduct records public, and prosecutorial jurisdiction, among others.

Though Governor Jay Inslee [voiced support](#) for reform – including on independent investigation, chokeholds, and creating a legally binding obligation that officers report misconduct – he did not order a session to address those measures. This may be due to his [formation of a task force](#) to provide recommendations for legislation, which will meet to discuss policing reform through the fall.

Joe Biden [won](#) Washington in the 2020 presidential election.



1,322,116 MENTIONS
16 PROPOSALS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

ILLINOIS

Though several Democrats [sought a special session](#) on police reform, none has been called; lawmakers have instead worked on policies over virtual hearings.

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), Illinois lawmakers have proposed 16 reform measures, including on oversight, use of force, hate crimes, demilitarization, training, recruitment, funding, and prosecutorial jurisdiction, among others. Several lawmakers reportedly plan to [propose legislation](#) in the fall veto session this November and December.

Governor JB Pritzker announced [five new appointments](#) to the state's Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board. Though Pritzker instituted limited action, he [pledged](#) to work with state lawmakers and community leaders to reform law enforcement and criminal justice in Illinois, including [potential accountability measures](#) such as licensing police officers as a way to regulate discipline. (Notably, over the summer, Pritzker announced programs to address [juvenile justice](#) and [housing insecurity](#) for justice-involved individuals.)

Joe Biden [won](#) Illinois in the 2020 presidential election.

100,000-500,000 MENTIONS (MAY 31-SEPTEMBER 15)

Lawmakers in these states have said they would introduce a number of reform proposals; in several cases, coalitions put forward packages of reforms they intend to introduce in future legislative sessions. However, with the exception of Nebraska, Indiana, and Arkansas, governors in these states – all Republican – took no executive actions on police reform.

Additionally, lawmakers in five states from this group have publicly called for special sessions on police reform.

State Legislatures Out-of-Session (May 31-Sept 15): 100,000-1,000,000 Mentions

State	Mentions	Proposals	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
Texas	943,204	6	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Oklahoma	380,872	9	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Nebraska	364,160	7 ¹¹	1	N/A ¹²	Republican	Trump
Maryland	358,735	15	0	Democrat	Republican	Biden
Arizona	326,632	5	0	Republican	Republican	Biden (flipped)
Indiana	224,105	42	3	Republican	Republican	Trump
Alaska	145,765	0	0	Republican ¹³	Republican	Trump
Arkansas	134,185	0	2	Republican	Republican	Trump
Alabama	121,706	7	0	Republican	Republican	Trump



TEXAS

Despite nearly one million mentions, Texas saw a limited number of reform proposals put forward publicly. Notably, Governor Greg Abbott did not take executive action on reform; rather, he joined a number of state officials in announcing a [legislative proposal to discourage the defunding of law enforcement](#) in the state.

The Texas Legislative Black Caucus [proposed](#) a legislative package of six reforms that would address qualified immunity; require officer intervention; ban chokeholds, emphasize de-escalation in all situations, and severely limit an officer's ability to use lethal force; end arrest for fine-only violations; require corroboration for undercover testimony; and institute departmental accountability measures. In mid-June, Democratic Lawmakers [urged](#) Governor Abbott to call a special session to address police reform.

Donald Trump [won](#) Texas in the 2020 presidential election.

943,204 MENTIONS
6 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

¹¹ Nebraska held its [second session](#) of the legislature in late July, after the period of this report's study of the immediate response to police violence.

¹² Nebraska has a [unicameral, non-partisan legislature](#): Republicans technically maintain trifecta control.

¹³ Alaska's [status](#) is considered by BallotPedia as a divided government, as Republicans did not organize a majority in the House.



380,872 MENTIONS
9 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

OKLAHOMA

Democratic lawmakers [proposed](#) a set of nine reforms, including to create an Office of Independent Monitor within the Oklahoma State Attorney General's Office; to require the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation to report the total number of excessive force cases online; to study community policing standards and training; to examine use of force policies and data; to standardize training; and to mandate law enforcement agencies report officer resignations during internal investigations, among other reforms.

Though Governor Kevin Stitt did not take executive action on police reform, he hosted [several roundtable discussions](#) on race in June.

Donald Trump [won](#) Oklahoma in the 2020 presidential election.



364,160 MENTIONS
7 PROPOSALS
1 EXECUTIVE ACTION

NEBRASKA

Nebraska's Legislature reconvened on July 20. Lawmakers filed at least six study resolutions around reform, including measures to complete a comprehensive study on the reform of policing in Nebraska ([LR377](#)); to examine whether care and safety of individuals can be enhanced by allowing mental health providers to coordinate with law enforcement ([LR379](#)); to review the collective-bargaining agreements of law enforcement agencies ([LR381](#)); to examine the feasibility of a prosecutor transparency act ([LR146](#)); to examine the terms used to refer to law enforcement officers in Nebraska statutes ([LR416](#)); and to examine the existing policies on use of force ([LR 417](#)). One bill was introduced, which would adopt the Municipal Police Oversight Act ([LB1222](#)).

In August, Governor Pete Ricketts approved [LB924](#), a bill introduced in January that requires implicit bias training for officers. Ricketts also said at a June [press conference](#) that he was open to a second look at a 2018 bill that would have allowed the state's crime commission to investigate any law enforcement agency.

Also in August, 11 Nebraska lawmakers [filed paperwork](#) with the secretary of state's office to ask their colleagues whether they would approve a special session to address police reform and COVID-19 issues. A spokesman for Governor Ricketts [reportedly](#) said he did not intend to do so.

Donald Trump [won](#) Nebraska in the 2020 presidential election.



358,735 MENTIONS
15 PROPOSAL
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

MARYLAND

Maryland's Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee [issued](#) a package of 15 reforms, including on use of physical or deadly force standards; creation of a misconduct database; elimination of no-knock warrants and establishing officer duty to intervene and report misconduct; whistleblower protections; prohibiting purchasing certain military-grade equipment; public access to and court admissibility of body camera footage; the ability of state prosecutors to investigate use of force and fatal officer encounters; financial liability surrounding police misconduct investigations; and required routine psychological testing for law enforcement officers, among others.

Several Maryland Democrats have [called](#) for a special session this fall to address both police reform and COVID-19-related issues. (The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee began [holding](#) interim bill hearings on police reform on September 23.)

Joe Biden [won](#) Nebraska in the 2020 presidential election.



326,632 MENTIONS
5 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

ARIZONA

Arizona Democrats [issued](#) at least five reform proposals, including measures requiring all police officers to wear body cameras, permitting independent investigations into deadly use of force, launching a peace officers' database of disciplinary actions, new training on cultural sensitivity and de-escalation, and limiting qualified immunity.

Though Governor Doug Ducey did not take executive action on police reform, he said at a June [press conference](#) that he was willing to lead on law enforcement reforms, such as diversifying state Peace Officer Standards and Training Board and police ranks.

On June 3rd, Arizona House and Senate Democrats [called](#) on Governor Ducey to hold a special session to address police reform. (In a July interview, Ducey [said](#) he would call one "if necessary.")

Arizona flipped blue in the 2020 presidential election, with Joe Biden [becoming](#) the second democrat in 70 years to win the state.



224,105 MENTIONS
42 PROPOSALS
3 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

INDIANA

The Indiana Black Legislative Caucus [introduced](#) a justice reform policy agenda that includes at least 42 criminal justice reform proposals that they plan to push for in next year's legislative session. The agenda covers five key goals: save lives, hold officers accountable, empower communities, change culture, and improve transparency.

Governor Eric Holcomb announced [three police reform steps](#) he intends to implement, including requiring the use of body cameras for every frontline state police trooper by spring 2021; requiring a third-party review of law enforcement curriculum and training; and directing the state's Management Performance Hub to create a public data portal to illustrate how state programs are working.

On July 21st, Indiana Democratic lawmakers, including the Black Legislative Caucus, [requested](#) a special session in August to address police reform and COVID-19.

Donald Trump [won](#) Indiana in the 2020 presidential election.



ALASKA

Though no records were found of state-level reform proposals, in July, the Anchorage Assembly (the representative body of Alaska's largest city and [nearly half](#) the state's population) [issued](#) four reform proposals, including the creation of a civilian review board to independently investigate alleged police misconduct, reinstating the Police Community Relations Task Force, requiring APD to make their policies available online, and body cameras.

Governor Mike Dunleavy did not take executive action on police reform, but notably signed an [administrative order](#) establishing a 9-1-1 and Dispatch Consolidation Working Group.

Donald Trump [won](#) Alaska in the 2020 presidential election.

326,632 MENTIONS
5 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



ARKANSAS

Governor Asa Hutchinson signed an [executive order](#) in June establishing the Task Force to Advance the State of Law Enforcement in Arkansas – a body charged with reviewing training, policy, and operations; considering processes for accountability, discipline, removal, and decertification; creating a statewide public database of complaints and resolutions involving officers; and studying potential community policing programs, among other provisions. He signed a [second order](#) a few days later expanding the task force. (Hutchinson notably [commended](#) legislators in late August for a draft of proposed hate-crime legislation.)

Donald Trump [won](#) Arkansas in the 2020 presidential election.

134,185 MENTION
0 PROPOSALS
2 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



ALABAMA

Members of the Democratic Caucus [issued](#) at least six reform proposals, including measures pertaining to police de-escalation and crisis prevention training, tracking “bad actors,” qualified immunity, extensive background checks, and mandatory body cameras. Additionally, State Representative Juandalynn Givan pre-filed a bill ([HB 6](#)) for the 2021 session pertaining to the disclosure of law enforcement video and audio recordings.

Donald Trump [won](#) Alabama in the 2020 presidential election.

121,706 MENTIONS
7 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

LESS THAN 100,000 MENTIONS (MAY 31-SEPTEMBER 15)

The only state with less than 100,000 mentions where public records were found of reform proposals was Montana, which is also the only state in this category with a divided government. Similarly, no governor in this group of states – Republican or Democrat – took a significant executive action on police reform.¹⁴

State Legislatures Out-of-Session (May 31-Sept 15): <100,000 Mentions						
State	Mentions	Proposals	Executive Actions	Legislature	Governor	Presidential Election
West Virginia	67,203	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Idaho	59,798	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Maine	56,431	0	0	Democrat	Democrat	Biden
South Dakota	53,883	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
Montana	49,661	2	0	Republican	Democrat	Trump
Wyoming	18,661	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump
North Dakota	17,063	0	0	Republican	Republican	Trump



WEST VIRGINIA

Governor Jim Justice [addressed](#) protests in a June 5th press conference but did not take executive action.

Donald Trump [won](#) West Virginia in the 2020 presidential election.

67,203 MENTIONS
0 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



IDAHO

Governor Brad Little took no significant actions on police reform, and no public records of any legislative police reform proposals were identified.

Donald Trump [won](#) Idaho in the 2020 presidential election.

67,203 MENTIONS
0 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



MAINE

Though lawmakers did not publicly put forward reform proposals, in late June, the Board of Trustees of the Maine Criminal Justice Academy changed its [statewide minimum standards](#) for use of force.

Joe Biden [won](#) Maine in the 2020 presidential election.

56,431 MENTIONS
0 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

¹⁴ Some have held or intend to hold sessions to pass COVID-19-related legislation – including [Idaho](#) and [South Dakota](#).



MONTANA

Senator JP Pomnichowski (D) led two bill drafts, including one revising discrimination laws involving peace officers ([LC0218](#)) and an unspecified measure revising laws around law enforcement ([LC0186](#)).

Donald Trump [won](#) Montana in the 2020 presidential election.

49,661 MENTIONS
2 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



SOUTH DAKOTA

Governor Kristi Noem did not take executive action to address police reform, [arguing](#) it is a local issue.

Donald Trump [won](#) South Dakota in the 2020 presidential election.

53,883 MENTIONS
0 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



WYOMING

Governor Mark Gordon, who did not take executive action on reform, said in a June [interview](#) that decisions on policing should be determined at a local level.

Donald Trump [won](#) Wyoming in the 2020 presidential election.

18,661 MENTIONS
0 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS



NORTH DAKOTA

Though Governor Doug Burgum did not take executive action on police reform, he did announce a new [public resource](#) to increase criminal justice data transparency. (In a June [statement](#), Burgum said that he did not have plans to propose a statewide ban on chokeholds.)

Donald Trump [won](#) North Dakota in the 2020 presidential election.

17,063 MENTIONS
0 PROPOSALS
0 EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

METHODOLOGY

STATE LEGISLATIVE & GUBERNATORIAL ACTION

To identify relevant legislation in each state, keyword searches were conducted using the legislative aggregation tool Quorum, the National Conference of State Legislatures' policing state bill tracking database, and various state and local databases. The resulting bills were then reviewed to determine whether they included one or more reform measures, categorized by the following issue areas:

- Body Cameras
- Civilian Review
- Residency Requirements
- Community Policing
- Cultural Diversity Training
- Data Collection
- Defunding or Disbanding Police Forces
- Demilitarization
- Mental Health & Medical Attention
- Misconduct Disclosure
- Miscellaneous Administrative Reforms
- Officer Intervention
- Prosecutorial Jurisdiction for Police Suspects
- Union Reform
- Use-of-Force Reforms and Chokehold Bans
- Qualified Immunity

Party control was reviewed using the National Conference of State Legislatures, while gubernatorial reform actions were identified using state governor's office news releases, proclamations, and executive orders. For the purposes of this report, "Executive Action" includes, but is not limited to: signing a reform bill, issuing an executive order instituting a reform, convening a special session of the legislature to address reform, creating reform initiatives or task forces, establishing policing oversight or accountability boards, or developing new public tools or investigative processes aimed at encouraging reform. (Executive orders authorizing the deployment of National Guard or establishing curfews in response to demonstrations were not included.)

For states not in session, proposals and bill drafts were identified through a review of the NCSL's policing state bill tracking database, news articles, press releases, and social media posts from lawmakers, caucuses, and legislative bodies. Special session requests were identified through a review of news articles, state legislature websites, and social media posts from lawmakers and legislative bodies.

SENTIMENT MONITORING

Signal Labs' Media Intelligence Cloud was used to identify the number of social justice media mentions about each state. This data was measured by analyzing the number of social justice key words that appeared in the same publication or social media post as a mention of a state or state key word, including:

- The names of nationally & locally recognized victims of police brutality
- Terms associated with Black Lives Matter demonstrations
- Police reform measures
- State elected officials
- Police officials
- State names and capitals
- Cities with large-scale Black Lives Matter demonstrations

Signal's searches drew from millions of US-based media outlets and platforms, including LexisNexis, broadcasts, Facebook, Reddit, Twitter, blogs, and forums, among others.





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Fastest-Growing
Companies of 2020

Inc.

America's 5,000
Fastest-Growing
Companies of
2019 and 2020



Seven 2020 Tellys
for Outstanding
Video Production



ABOUT US

Marathon Strategies is an independent communications and research firm that helps corporations, industry associations, brands, and nonprofits realize their organizational goals and manage reputational challenges.

To learn more about how we can help you achieve your public affairs and communications goals, please get in touch with Phil Singer via info@marathonstrategies.com or call (202) 499-6482.

We are a team of more than 50 experienced campaign operatives, crisis professionals, researchers, digital and data experts, graphic designers, government aides, reporters, lawyers, and television producers who each bring a unique perspective to every challenge. As a result, we are trusted advisers to a diverse portfolio of clients, all united by a need for independent, candid, and thoughtful counsel.

OUR APPROACH

Marathon is constantly pushing the boundaries of modern communications. Gone are the days when earned media placements alone could shape a narrative and drive the discussion. We believe all successful communications campaigns must be built on a foundation of three core elements: original, compelling written and visual content informed by extensive research; external voices that endorse and amplify content; and targeted distribution channels that ensure that the right messages are reaching the right audiences.

OUR SERVICES

- Original Content
- Research & Cyber Investigations
- Strategic & Crisis Communications
- Media Monitoring & Rapid Response
- Digital Engagement & Audience Targeting
- Field Services
- Creative Services
- Media Training

SAY THEIR NAMES

This report examines the relationship between online discussion surrounding social justice in America and state-level legislative activity. Marathon specializes in this type of analysis – employing a full-service online intelligence program to provide clients insights into what audiences think and feel about the issues that impact their organizations, as well as to identify the key influencers whom clients need to engage to advance their objectives in social, business or political arenas. This includes daily tracking of key media mentions and relevant news stories across traditional, social, and broadcast platforms.

OUR SERVICES



STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

We recognize that the best strategic communications plans advance corporate or organizational goals. As such, we build out integrated programs that leverage owned and earned content. From traditional print and television news to digital outlets and social media, we help advance your story on any platform with messaging designed to influence audiences and create change.



MEDIA RELATIONS

We bridge the gap between our clients and the media agenda to generate high-impact and authentic earned media campaigns. Marathon is deeply ingrained in the evolving media landscape; we have strong relationships with editors, producers, and journalists — many of whom are friends and former colleagues.



PUBLIC AFFAIRS

We help organizations anticipate, respond to, and influence the public policy landscape. Whether the goal is to protect existing legislation or represent organizational interests on new policy issues, Marathon helps our clients navigate complex legislative challenges at the municipal, city, state, and federal levels.



DIGITAL

Sophisticated digital operations are essential to any modern communications strategy. Our proprietary methodology combining cutting-edge targeting tools, online insights, and social intelligence allows us to deliver messages and content directly to the audiences we want to influence. Whether the goal is to amplify positive earned media, engage strategic partners, or mitigate a crisis, we can help.



RESEARCH & INVESTIGATIONS

We produce policy analysis, background vetting, litigation support, political campaign research, industry trends, and competitive intelligence that informs our communications counsel, strategies, and content development.



CRISIS & ISSUES MANAGEMENT

The best way to respond to a crisis is to anticipate and be prepared for it in the first place. From developing proactive media outreach strategies to mitigating crises and generating original content, Marathon helps our clients plan for and manage any reputational issue that may impact an organization.



CREATIVE & CONTENT

Our team of talented copywriters, designers, illustrators and videographers bring clients' messages to life through creative campaigns that grab audiences' attention through compelling, emotional, and thought-provoking visual concepts.



FIELD SERVICES & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

With reach into every state, district, and media market, we maintain a network of campaign operatives, public affairs specialists, communications experts, and strategists that help us identify the voices who can amplify messages and execute local communications, public affairs, and grassroots campaigns.