

Attorney General Raoul Urges U.S. Senate To Pass The George Floyd Justice In Policing Act Of 2021

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CHICAGO – Attorney General Kwame Raoul and New York Attorney General Letitia James today led a coalition of 11 attorneys general urging the U.S. Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021, which will reform law enforcement agencies nationwide and give state attorneys general clear statutory authority to investigate patterns or practices of unconstitutional policing.

Raoul and the coalition [issued a letter](#) today to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell calling on the Senate to pass H.R. 1280, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021. The legislation requires law enforcement agencies throughout the country to enact reforms and gives state attorneys general authority to investigate and address patterns or practices of unconstitutional policing, as well as to acquire data about use of excessive force by officers.

“It is past time to enact meaningful reforms that ensure accountability and transparency for law enforcement agencies throughout the country,” Raoul said. “The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 is a step toward dismantling the decades of systemic bias in policing that continues to claim Black and Brown lives, and I urge the Senate to join our effort to end the civil rights violations by law enforcement.”

Raoul and the coalition are calling on the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 as the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who is accused of the May 25, 2020 murder of George Floyd, is ongoing. The legislation is aimed at improving police accountability, transparency in policing practices, and police training and policies. As a result of discussions Raoul previously led with Congressional leadership, the measure was amended to give state attorneys general authority to conduct pattern-or-practice investigations, particularly in the event that the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) fails to use its authority to act. The legislation gives state attorneys general authority to issue subpoenas as part of pattern-or-practice investigations and, when necessary, take action in federal district court.

The legislation also authorizes appropriations of up to \$100 million for a federal grant program to help state attorneys general fund pattern-or-practice investigations during fiscal years 2022 to 2024.

In addition to enabling attorneys general to conduct pattern-or-practice investigations, H. R. 1280 would allow them to acquire data about the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers. Such data would be especially important when identifying law enforcement agencies that have above-average rates of excessive force complaints, which can help identify at-risk law enforcement agencies before a devastating incident occurs. For example, Chauvin had 18 prior complaints filed against him with the Minneapolis Police Department’s Internal Affairs.

Attorney General Raoul is committed to taking a comprehensive approach to addressing criminal justice and policing reform. Raoul's initiative to improve Illinois' police certification and decertification process and give the Illinois Attorney General's office authority under state law to conduct pattern-and-practice investigations of civil rights violations by law enforcement was signed into law in January. In addition, the Attorney General's office continues to enforce the terms of a comprehensive consent decree to reform the Chicago Police Department (CPD), which was entered after former Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the DOJ would no longer use its authority to hold officers and departments accountable for a pattern or practice of misconduct. The independent monitor's latest report released last week showed the city and CPD have failed to achieve compliance with many reforms – meeting less than 20% of their accountability-related obligations. As a result, Raoul is calling on CPD and the city to continue to work with community stakeholders to implement the overdue reforms.

Joining Raoul and James in calling on the Senate to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 are the attorneys general of the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, and Virginia.