

Vocal NY

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vocal-ny.org/press-statements/vocal-ny-responds-to-candidate-comments-on-policing-and-criminalization-during-first-mayoral-debate>

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VOCAL-NY RESPONDS TO CANDIDATE COMMENTS ON POLICING AND CRIMINALIZATION DURING FIRST MAYORAL DEBATE

VOCAL-NY Called for Candidates to [Commit to the Caring & Compassionate New Deal](#) Ahead of Last Nights Debates

Candidates Discussed Public Health Issues Facing New Yorkers, Including [Housing, Policing, and Rising Violence in the City](#)

NEW YORK In response to tonight's first mayoral debate, VOCAL-NY released the following statement, **attributable to Paulette Soltani, Political Director at VOCAL-NY:**

Last night's Mayoral debate reminded us about what we already knew: Andrew Yang and Eric Adams are committed to Drug War policies and if elected, they will worsen our City's crises.

The War on Drugs has driven unprecedented policing and incarceration of people experiencing homelessness, people struggling with substance use and unmet mental health needs. But it goes far beyond that. Drug War policies are part of the vicious machine that is fueling these issues in the first place. Yang and Adams are not only refusing to commit to defunding the police, they're calling for more criminalization. More Deterrence units and more police on subways will continue to brutalize people and further drive public health crises. We will not go back to Giuliani's New York.

Candidates say they want to end homelessness and overdose deaths out one side of their mouth, then call for continued policing out the other. Criminalization won't end homelessness, overdose deaths, or mental health crises—it'll make them worse. We need a leader that understands this and will fight for a Caring and Compassionate New Deal.

Background:

In March, VOCAL-NY hosted New York City mayoral candidates Eric Adams, Shaun Donovan, Kathryn Garcia, Ray McGuire, Dianne Morales, Scott Stringer, Maya Wiley, and Andrew Yang to discuss **critical questions on homelessness, overdose, drug policy, and ending New York City's use of police and jails to solve social problems** at a forum moderated by social justice leaders from VOCAL-NY. The full forum can be viewed [here](#) and their written answers can be found [here](#).

During last year's budget fight VOCAL-NY helped launch an occupation outside of City Hall to defund the NYPD by at least \$1 billion and reinvest in communities. Despite mass uprising across the country and in New York City, the Mayor and City Council [failed](#) to defund the police or make meaningful investments in our communities.

This year [VOCAL-NY's budget priorities](#) build on last year's demands: invest \$4 billion in what communities need, and defund \$4 billion from the NYPD, District Attorneys, Corrections, and the total elimination of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor—the only office of its kind in the United States, created in 1972 following Nixon's declaration of the [War on Drugs](#).

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