



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on June 23, 2020

President Trump Orders Law Enforcement to Arrest Anyone Vandalizing Federal Monuments

President Trump [authorized federal law-enforcement officials](#) on Tuesday to arrest anyone vandalizing “any monument, statue or other such Federal property,” charging them under the Veterans Memorial Preservation and Recognition Act.

His tweet late Sunday night laid the groundwork for Monday’s order: “Numerous people [were] arrested in D.C. for the disgraceful vandalism in Lafayette Park, of the magnificent Statue of Andrew Jackson, in addition to the exterior defacing of St. John’s Church across the street. 10 years in prison under the Veteran’s Memorial Preservation Act. Beware!”



Early Tuesday morning he made it official:

I have authorized the Federal Government to arrest anyone who vandalizes or destroys any monument, statue or other such Federal property in the U.S. with up to 10 years in prison.... This action is taken effective immediately, but may also be used retroactively for destruction or vandalism already caused. There will be no exceptions!

This was a major theme in Trump’s 2016 campaign and is rapidly ascending to prominence in his reelection efforts.

During his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention in July of 2016, he made it clear that he would be “the president of law and order,” stating,

Together, we will lead our party back to the White House, and we will lead our country back to safety, prosperity, and peace. We will be a country of generosity and warmth. But we will also be a country of law and order....

The most basic duty of government is to defend the lives of its own citizens. Any government that fails to do so is a government unworthy to lead.

The American people will come first, he said, adding,

My plan will begin with safety at home — which means safe neighborhoods, secure borders, and protection from terrorism. There can be no prosperity without law and order....

I will work with, and appoint, the best prosecutors and law-enforcement officials in the country to get the job done. In this race for the White House, I am the Law and Order candidate.

The president had the chance to reinforce that position following the commencement of the George Floyd riots. On June 1, Trump gave a short speech from the White House, saying, “My first and highest duty as President is to defend our great country and the American people. I swore an oath to uphold the



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laws of our nation, and that is exactly what I will do.”

He promised that Floyd “will not have died in vain”, adding,

But we cannot allow the righteous cries and peaceful protestors to be drowned out by an angry mob. The biggest victims of the rioting are peaceful and peace-loving citizens in our poorest communities, and as their President, I will fight to keep them safe.

I will fight to protect you. I am your President of law and order.

This generated faux concerns from predictable parties that Trump was becoming a dictator. Far-left Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) called Trump’s speech “fascist”: “The fascist speech Donald Trump just delivered verged on a declaration of war against American citizens. I fear for our country tonight and will not stop defending America against Trump’s assault.”

California Democrat Senator Kamala Harris tweeted, “These are not the words of a president. They are the words of a dictator.”

Law and Order was the key plank in the platform that won the presidency for Richard Nixon in 1968. Just before that election, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, “It’s well documented by now that law and order is the No. 1 domestic issue of this election.” Polls asking which candidate, Nixon or his opponent, Hubert Humphrey, could best “maintain law and order” gave Nixon a 12-point lead over Humphrey.

Whether those defacing monuments and burning cities know it or not, they are playing into Trump’s hands. Within minutes of his June 2 speech his reelection campaign began running ads promoting his presidency as one of “Triumph. Leadership. Law and Order.” One may count on others following cuts from his speech in Tulsa on Saturday as well as clips from his “monument protection” announcement on Tuesday.

It worked for Nixon. It’s likely to work for Trump as well.

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