

Wisconsin Budget Project: New online database shows law enforcement spending in individual communities

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Local governments in Wisconsin — including cities, villages, towns, and counties — spend more than \$2 billion a year on law enforcement and related costs like jails. Black community leaders have called on policymakers to put that money to better use, shifting resources away from law enforcement and towards mental health services, housing, job assistance, and other services that strengthen communities.

Now, a new online database from the Wisconsin Budget Project allows residents to look up spending on law enforcement and related costs for Wisconsin's largest 100 cities and all 72 counties, and see how that amount compares to public spending for other other purposes.

“Wisconsin policymakers should listen to calls to assess law enforcement spending, and reallocate resources in a way that better supports communities and allows them to thrive,” said Tamarine Cornelius, an analyst at the Wisconsin Budget Project. “This database gives Wisconsin residents information they can use to facilitate this conversation in their communities.”

The Wisconsin Budget Project found that in one-third of Wisconsin's largest cities, or 32 out of the 100 most populous cities, policymakers have chosen to spend more on law enforcement than on anything else, including transportation, sanitation, parks and development, or fire and ambulance services. Each of these top-spending cities allocate at least \$1 out of every \$5 in their budgets to law enforcement. Among Wisconsin's ten largest cities, four of them — Milwaukee, Kenosha, Racine, and

Appleton — spend more
on law enforcement than any other cost.

Three Wisconsin cities go even further, spending more than \$1 out of every \$3 in
their budget on law enforcement: Glendale, Muskego, and Mequon.

The online database of local law enforcement spending can be found at
<http://www.wisconsinbudgetproject.org/law-enforcement-spending-in-your-community>.