

# Trump, the self-styled 'law and order' candidate, could change tone on policing, federal oversight



Donald Trump stunned America and the world, riding a wave of populist resentment to defeat Hillary Clinton in the race to become the 45th president of the United States.



By **Kevin Rector**  
The Baltimore Sun

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Will a Trump DOJ have reduced role going after police misconduct?

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fter serving as an aggressive watchdog for police misconduct during the Obama administration, the Department of Justice could see its role diminished under Donald Trump, analysts say.

Such a shift would drastically alter the federal response to the ongoing debate around policing in American cities at a time when many local departments are ill-equipped to tackle reforms on their own, they said.

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"This is a cataclysmic change," said Jonathan Smith, a former chief of special litigation in the Justice Department's civil rights division, where he oversaw more than 20 investigations into police agencies. "The world really did change under our feet."

Trump, the self-styled "law and order" candidate, said during the campaign he would reintroduce the controversial stop-and-frisk policies criticized by President Barack Obama's Justice Department in cities across the country. Rudy Giuliani, a top Trump adviser and campaign surrogate, has been a champion of the tactic since his tenure as mayor of New York during the 1990s. He has been mentioned as a possible Trump pick for attorney general.

While Obama has focused on criminal justice reform, Trump campaigned on stronger support for police officers and a tougher approach against crime.

Samuel Walker, professor emeritus of criminology and criminal justice at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, said those differences in tone are likely to be reflected in how Trump deploys his Justice Department.

"This is a historic shift in public policy, and the policies in the federal government, and that's based on Trump's words, the Republican platform and the various people who are his advisers and supporters," Walker said.

Stephen Rushin, an assistant law professor at the University of Alabama, said "it's hard to imagine a Rudy Giuliani DOJ being the same rigorous enforcement arm as Eric Holder's or Loretta Lynch's DOJ" on police reform.

The shift could have a powerful impact in Baltimore, where Obama's Justice Department is currently negotiating a court-enforced consent decree mandating police reforms with city officials.

A recent Justice Department investigation found discriminatory and unconstitutional practices at nearly all levels of the Baltimore Police Department.

Rushin said all signs point to a Trump administration being less litigious on police reform.

He said that would continue a pattern since the Democratic presidency of Bill Clinton, when Congress gave the Justice Department the authority to investigate whether local police departments had a pattern or practice of violating individuals' civil rights.

Clinton's successor, Republican President George W. Bush, used that authority less than Clinton, Rushin said. Then Obama, a Democrat, succeeded Bush, and the rate of investigations shot back up.

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