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In the Wake of Trial Verdict, Police Group Says There's No Place for Citizen's Arrest Laws

Medford, MA — The guilty verdicts in the trial of Gregory McMichael, Travis McMichael, and William “Roddy” Bryan reaffirm what many of us already know—Citizen's Arrest Laws are outdated and unnecessary. In this instance, justice prevailed, and this jury delivered accountability and some semblance of closure for the Arbery family.

Ahmaud Arbery's murder did not have to happen. These laws, in general, were created during a time when police could not respond in a timely manner. Georgia's law, in particular, had its roots in the antebellum South to prevent slaves from escaping.

“This law was the legacy of a racist past. As we come to terms with uncomfortable truths about our nation, we have to confront them rather than hide from them,” said Lt. Diane Goldstein (Ret.), executive director of the Law Enforcement Action Partnership. “While we are glad that the law has since been amended, there are dozens of laws like this around the country. We need to remove these laws from the books to prevent another senseless tragedy from happening. We don't need these archaic laws when we have near-instant communication and the ability to dispatch police to remote areas within minutes. By allowing everyday citizens invoke centuries-old statutes to justify homicide, we are undermining the police officers who work tirelessly, day in and day out, to protect and serve our communities. In short, these laws make all of us and our communities less safe.”

Police are entrusted with the responsibility of making arrests because we receive extensive training and take an oath to protect the public by upholding the Constitution. It is unreasonable to expect civilians, who have not been trained, to safely perform an arrest without the potential for escalation, as happened in this tragedy.

While we value civilian cooperation to prevent and solve crime, the public trust is the cornerstone of modern day policing. It is a necessity for us to be able to effectively do our jobs. If our legal system continues to allow these laws to stand, allowing civilians to use force under the guise of law enforcement, it will erode the trust that we as police rely on to safely and effectively do our jobs.

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The Law Enforcement Action Partnership ([LEAP](#)) is a nonprofit group of police, judges, prosecutors, and other criminal justice professionals who use their expertise to advance public safety solutions. LEAP's nearly 200 law enforcement representatives from diverse backgrounds speak on behalf of thousands of law enforcement professionals across the U.S.