

The NATIONAL INTEREST FOUNDATION

[Ongoing Protests in Wisconsin and Oregon Emerge as a Major Political Talking Point](#)

Protests in Wisconsin and Oregon have intensified this week, with some demonstrations devolving into violence. Protesters continue to demand accountability and action from local officials to tackle racial inequality and police brutality, following a spate of police shootings of African-Americans. The protests in Portland, Oregon have carried on for nearly 100 straight days, and local officials are calling for a cessation of demonstrations over a recent increase in violence. Across Portland, infrastructure has been damaged, dozens of people have been hurt, and one person was killed as the authorities struggle to handle the growing demonstrations. In Kenosha, Wisconsin, a protest movement emerged following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, an unarmed African-American. The protests against police brutality began peacefully, but have descended into chaos similar to Portland. Businesses have been destroyed and stores have been looted by agitators within the protests, which led to the Wisconsin National Guard being deployed to the city. The protests have also emerged as a major political talking point ahead of the presidential election, with President Trump and former Vice President Biden offering contrasting approaches to deal with the unrest.

As the protests in Portland close in on 100 consecutive days, the demonstrations have grown more violent, especially at night. Clashes between far-right and far-left groups have also become more frequent, with one individual being killed as a result of demonstrators clashing. Earlier this week, a caravan of President Trump's supporters drove through downtown Portland to show their support for law enforcement. However, this led to clashes with counter-protesters who were demonstrating against police brutality and racial injustice. Additionally, the protests have prevented dozens of Portland businesses from opening out of fear of vandalism and looting. The Portland Business Alliance conducted a survey of dozens of business owners who claimed to have lost \$23 million as a result of the protests. As local officials struggle to contain the demonstrations, the federal government has urged Portland's authorities to request federal assistance. However, Mayor Ted Wheeler has resisted these calls up to now, saying that the entrance of federal law enforcement officers would only escalate the situation further.

In Kenosha, Wisconsin, protests broke out following the shooting of Jacob Blake, an unarmed African-American, by a white police officer. The demonstrations began peacefully, but were uprooted when people with malicious intentions began resorting to violence during the night. Businesses were vandalized and looted, with some being burned down. Similar to Portland, tensions were further heightened when protesters and counter-protesters began to clash, resulting in the deaths of two people. Additionally, evidence has surfaced of dozens of people entering Kenosha from out of state, seeking confrontation with protesters. To combat the violence occurring overnight, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers activated the national guard, and a curfew was placed on the city of Kenosha. Additionally, federal law enforcement was requested and roughly 200 officers arrived to assist Kenosha's local authorities. The activation of federal officers is where Wisconsin's approach to the protests differed from Oregon's, which has seemingly worked as the violence has largely ceased in Kenosha.

The protests in Kenosha and Portland have emerged as a major talking point for both President Trump and former Vice President Biden, as their 2020 presidential campaigns accelerate. President Trump has projected policies of strength to deal with the violence, including making mass arrests and shuttering the demonstrations by force. However, he is accused by critics of not appreciating the true meaning of the protests, which is police brutality and racial injustice. Former Vice President Biden has similarly rejected the violence, but failed to condemn it to the extent his critics would like. Biden has also sided with the protesters in denouncing police brutality, but this has led to scathing criticism from law enforcement officials who argue that he is abandoning them.