

St. Louis County Mayors' Six-Point Plan Calls for New Crime Legislation

St. Louis County, MO – April 18, 2023 – A group of St. Louis regional Mayors joined together calling for new Missouri legislation addressing rising crime in the region. “Crime is a regional issue, yet we have had no strong regional voice on solutions to reduce crime. Instead, we have had endless debates on defunding the police and the performance or lack thereof of Kim Gardner,” said Bridgeton Mayor Terry Briggs. “On the eve of the legislature debating a comprehensive crime bill, we are weighing in as a group focused on several items that we believe will reduce crime in the region.”

The group of Mayors calling for legislation includes: Bridgeton Mayor Terry Briggs, Wildwood Mayor Jim Bowlin, Manchester Mayor Mike Clement and Brentwood Mayor David Dimmitt.

“The morale of our police has been damaged. Penalties, probationary terms, etc. are too lenient, allowing criminals to remain on the street and crimes to increase – particularly auto thefts. Juveniles are now committing many serious crimes, with limited risk of significant penalties,” said Wildwood Mayor Jim Bowlin. “Prosecutorial resources are in some cases insufficient, and law enforcement resources have been under attack.”

We recognize the significant problems in the St. Louis City prosecutor’s office. Failure to prosecute criminals in any jurisdiction within this region affects the safety of all our residents. Crime is a regional problem and needs a regional solution.

We ask the legislature to combine the St. Louis City Circuit Attorney’s office and County Prosecuting Attorney’s office into one regional office. This office would have the resources and staff to administer fair criminal justice, ensure a speedy trial for the accused, and take dangerous criminals off the street.

Illegal fentanyl is now the leading cause of more than half of all overdose deaths in Missouri. It is becoming a greater crisis than crack cocaine was in the 90’s and requires immediate attention. “Penalties should be increased for the sale and distribution of fentanyl, one of the leading drugs involved in the deaths of thousands of Missourians. One pound of Fentanyl can deliver a lethal dose killing 250,000 people,” Bowlin added.

We ask the legislature to make it a life sentence without parole for illegally selling fentanyl that results in someone’s death, and a mandatory sentence of 25 years for possessing more than one pound.

“We need to crack down on drug dealers. Evidence suggests higher level drug dealers are likely to be illegally armed,” stated Mayor Dimmitt.

We ask the legislature to increase penalties for those in possession of a firearm and illegal controlled substances. Mirror the Armed Criminal Action statute (Section 571.015), making it a stand-alone offense for those using or possessing a firearm while

in the commission of any of the Chapter 579 offenses (trafficking, possession with the intent to distribute, sales or delivery of a controlled substance, i.e. all offenses other than mere possession), in which case, that person must serve a sentence of not less than 3 years and not to exceed 15 years in the Dept. of Corrections, consecutive to any sentence imposed on the underlying drug offense.

The Missouri Supreme Court has created a crisis by eliminating many cash bond options. Cash bonds serve as a deterrent to criminal activity, especially for repeat offenders. By holding them under cash bonds, repeat criminals are usually stuck in jail due to being unable to post bail, or are held accountable by those who post bail on their behalf.

We ask the legislature to implement mandatory cash bonds for charges on second (or more) offenses after a prior conviction to keep repeat offenders off the street.

There has been a massive increase in automobile thefts and break-ins across the state and country including over 7,500 in St. Louis alone last year. "Car theft and break-ins should be treated as seriously as home and real property break-ins," stated Mayor Mike Clement.

We ask the legislature to enhance the Burglary II statutory penalty to that of a Class C Felony and modify the existing language to include unlawful entry into a motor vehicle.

"Currently in St. Louis City and County, juvenile officers in the Family Court system use a 'point system' which aggregates only the most egregious crimes allegedly committed by the juvenile - as opposed to combining all crimes allegedly committed by the juvenile upon being detained by law enforcement officers," said Mayor Briggs. This results in juveniles, detained by law enforcement for vehicle theft or tampering with a motor vehicle, to be released without further detainment. Thus, a juvenile who allegedly committed the crime faces no consequences.

Worse yet, police officers are required to take the juveniles home if a guardian cannot be contacted to pick up the juvenile.

We ask the legislature to require officials to assess points based on all crimes allegedly committed by the juveniles and require either juveniles be detained for 24-hours or that their parents or legal guardians pick up the juveniles.

Government's first job is to protect its citizens and fundamental, substantive reform is needed to fix a system that is failing its residents. This comprehensive package of reforms makes meaningful changes now to protect our residents and all Missourians.

It is our hope the legislature will pass the legislation and send it to the Governor for signature.

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