



# Attorney General's Urban Crime Summit

September 16-19, 2013



*Kansas City*

*St. Louis*



## Report & Recommendations

March 21, 2014

Although crime is often viewed as a local issue, the rate of violent crime in Missouri's urban centers affects our entire state. Just as methamphetamine use migrates from rural to suburban regions, violent crime spills over city borders into neighboring counties throughout Missouri.

The cornerstone of our community – of any community – is public safety. No matter how much our state invests in economic development, no matter how many natural resources lie within our borders, no matter how well we train our workforce, there can be no prosperity where people do not feel safe.

As we drafted this report, both Kansas City and St. Louis saw over 100 homicides for 2013. Unfortunately, numbers such as these have become painfully familiar. This problem isn't confined to our large urban centers. Missouri's overall homicide rate is the ninth highest among all 50 states.

We must not become complacent about the damage being done, day after day, in our communities: young lives destroyed, families broken by grief, children buried by parents, and generations raised to accept violence as a fact of life.

But this trend of violence and tragedy can be reversed. Other communities facing the same challenges have found answers. Remarkably, in 1991, New York City saw 2,245 murders and had a murder rate of fourteen murders per one hundred thousand citizens. In 2013, New York City had 333 murders and had a homicide rate of less than four murders per one hundred thousand. Those are real lives saved, families kept intact, and neighborhoods preserved. The lesson to be learned from New York and other cities is that senseless violence can be stopped, if we demand it to be so.

In order to learn how other urban areas succeeded in lowering crime rates, we convened the Urban Crime Summit for four days in September, 2013. Each day's hearing was open to the public. A court reporter transcribed the testimony to create a historical and public record, which is now available online.

We invited the nation's leading criminologists and most experienced law enforcement authorities to participate, asking each of them: how can our state push back against these obscenely high rates of violence in our communities?

After reviewing the presentations and discussions, we collectively offer six recommendations regarding our state’s laws and law enforcement practices. All recommendations center around four focal points to reduce violent crime: prevention, intervention, enforcement, and reentry. Some involve statutory changes requiring legislative initiatives, such as establishing a pilot project for an armed offender docket and addressing privacy concerns raised by the growing use of advanced crime-detection technologies. For each recommendation involving a statutory change, we include sample legislative language. Other recommendations identify best practices, including designing evidence-based policing strategies and strengthening reentry and community programs to reduce the rate of recidivism.

With these recommendations, we hope to address weaknesses identified throughout the discussions, encourage continued efforts to strengthen our communities, and reaffirm our commitment to public safety throughout our state.

Respectfully,

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 1**

The General Assembly should establish a pilot project to create an armed offender docket, prioritizing violent crimes committed with the use of a firearm. The pilot project should include the production of an annual report to assess the efficacy of the armed offender docket, including a statistical evaluation by an accredited university.

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 2**

Law enforcement agencies across Missouri should implement proactive, evidence-based policing strategies to determine the best use of police resources, focusing on specific geographic areas and high-risk individuals.

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 3**

Law enforcement agencies should continue the adoption of real-time surveillance technologies to deter crime, improve identification of offenders, and reduce response times. The General Assembly should address privacy concerns raised by the use of this technology, including the use of license plate readers, to ensure information ascertained by such devices remains secure.

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 4**

To reduce recidivism, law enforcement and local communities should work cooperatively to assist offenders with reentry into society including using reentry courts and employment services.

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 5**

The General Assembly should consider expanding the membership of the Police Board of the Kansas City Police Department by two additional members, to include board participation by city officials specifically charged with oversight of city's budget and general services.

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 6**

Compensation for Missouri's county sheriffs should be on a salary scale similar to those of other county law enforcement officials, instead of based on each county's total assessed valuation.

## **RECOMMENDATION NO. 1**

**The General Assembly should establish a pilot project to create an armed offender docket, prioritizing violent crimes committed with the use of a firearm. The pilot project should include the production of an annual report to assess the efficacy of the armed offender docket, including a statistical evaluation by an accredited university.**

St. Louis and Kansas City continue to struggle with high rates of violence involving firearms, including homicides, robberies, and aggravated assaults. Multiple experts testified that the current federal protocol for prosecuting gun crimes is far superior to that existing in Missouri's state courts. However, our federal courts cannot handle every case involving gun violence.

State courts should increase the consistency, consequences, and speed of its prosecutions of gun offenses. To this end, both common sense and evidence-based research methods support exploring the creation of specialized court dockets in St. Louis and Kansas City to handle armed offenders.

Research shows that there is a direct impact on violent crime when armed offenders are swiftly and appropriately punished. An armed offender docket could provide greater speed and consistency in sentencing for offenses involving firearms by isolating these cases in a specific docket, with the same judge or judges presiding over the entirety of the docket, from charge to release. Organizing cases in this manner would also bring greater expertise, more personalized interaction, and increased accountability needed to affect an individual offender's behavior and, hopefully, reduce the overall rate of violent crime.

The General Assembly should enact legislation establishing a pilot project in St. Louis and Kansas City for an armed offender docket, prioritizing violent crimes carried out with firearms. Specifically, weapons offenses listed in Chapter 571, RSMo and robbery in the first degree under section 569.020, RSMo should be targeted. The legislation should include a surcharge, levied at the discretion of the court, to defray the costs of the prosecution and supervision of the offenders.

Because of the heightened priority necessary in cases involving guns, the program should require a minimum cash bond to be set at \$25,000 to \$50,000, and it should require speedy resolution of charges. The legislature

should consider setting specific statutory guidelines for both pretrial bonds and disposition of cases.

In order to assess the success of the pilot project, each circuit court engaged in the pilot project should engage a researcher or researchers from an accredited university with expertise in statistics and criminology to study the efficacy of the project relative to current sentencing practices and recidivism rates. The circuit court should publish an annual report summarizing the project's operations and assessing its results.

In addition to providing an overall assessment of the armed offender docket, the researchers will be able to collect valuable data and develop an integrated information system based on real-time information. While many law enforcement agencies are evidence-based in their procedures, there continues to exist a lack of research regarding how the judicial process affects the rate of violent crime. Through this pilot project, researchers will be able to gather data and provide up-to-date statistics and patterns to illustrate whether or not an armed offender docket is producing beneficial impacts.

**Proposed legislative language:**

478.252. 1. The circuit courts of the city of St. Louis and Jackson County shall establish a pilot project called an "armed offender docket." The armed offender docket shall have dedicated judges and other personnel for all matters of hearing, setting of bail or other pretrial matters, trial, sentencing, and supervision of the accused or convicted, in all actions brought pursuant to chapter 571 and section 569.020 on or after the effective date of the creation of said special docket. The provisions of this section shall expire on December 31, 2020.

2. The circuit court may impose a thirty dollar surcharge for each criminal case assigned to the armed offender docket. Moneys obtained from the surcharge shall be collected in the manner as provided in sections 488.010 to 488.020, and shall be used to defray the costs of prosecution and pretrial supervision and statistical analysis in such cases and for no other purpose. No such surcharge shall be collected in any proceeding when the proceeding or the defendant has been dismissed by the court or when costs are to be paid by the state, county, or municipality.

3. The presiding judge of any circuit court that creates an armed offender docket, along with the prosecuting attorney or circuit attorney, and all law enforcement agencies in such circuit, shall assist in the coordinating and sharing of court and law enforcement data and information that is

relevant to the operation and evaluation of the armed offender docket. Such information shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

(1) The number of cases in which the court ordered the defendant to be confined pretrial;

(2) The number of cases in which the court ordered release of the defendant pretrial;

(3) The range of bond amounts in cases in which the defendant was released pretrial;

(4) The number of cases in which the court revoked the defendant's release prior to trial;

(5) The number of cases dismissed by the court;

(6) The number of cases disposed of by plea and the range of sentences imposed in such cases;

(7) The number of cases resulting in jury verdicts, including acquittals;

(8) The number of cases resulting in a sentence of confinement and the range of sentences imposed;

(9) The number of cases in which, after a judgment of conviction either by plea or verdict, the court granted probation and release;

(10) The number of cases in which probation revocation was sought and is pending;

(11) The number of cases in which probation revocation was granted; and

(12) Any information reasonably requested by such agencies or by a research university with an accredited program in criminology, criminal justice, public health, or social work.

4. Within six months after each anniversary of the creation of any armed offender docket, the circuit court shall provide and publish a public report on the operations of the armed offender docket during the year preceding the anniversary, including any commentary on such operations as

may be offered by such research university or a prosecuting attorney, circuit attorney, or law enforcement agency in said circuit.

544.457. 1. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 20 of article I of the Missouri Constitution to the contrary, upon a showing that the defendant poses a danger to a crime victim, the community, or any other person, the court may use such information in determining the appropriate amount of bail, to increase the amount of bail, to deny bail entirely or impose any special conditions which the defendant and surety shall guarantee.

2. Whenever the offense or offenses charged include an offense under chapter 571 or section 569.020, there shall be a presumption that the defendant poses a danger to the community such that bail, if appropriate at all, shall at a minimum require a deposit of cash in an amount not less than twenty-five thousand dollars. If the court determines, contrary to this presumption, that the defendant does not pose such a danger to the community, the court shall set forth written findings supporting that determination.

## **RECOMMENDATION NO. 2**

**Law enforcement agencies across Missouri should implement proactive, evidence-based policing strategies to determine the best use of resources, focusing on specific geographic areas and high-risk individuals.**

Evidence-based policing has had an enormous impact on lowering crime rates across the country. Successful evidence-based policing requires a strategic use of crime data and analysis to guide decisions of the police agency regarding the most effective distribution of police resources. Evidence-based policing requires a shift in emphasis from reactive strategies to proactive planning and from prioritizing the quantity of random beat patrols to prioritizing the quality of police interactions.

George Mason University's Center of Evidence-Based Policing found the most successful strategies in modern law enforcement focused on proactive policing interactions, tailored and focused to address specific problem areas.<sup>1</sup> Two examples are "hot spot" policing targeting specific

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<sup>1</sup> The Center has developed a matrix plotting the usefulness of various strategies, based on an analysis of over 125 studies. The matrix is available without cost as a tool for law enforcement agencies.

geographic locations within a city and focused deterrence interactions targeting specific high-risk individuals within a community.

**Targeting places:** Studies repeatedly show that over fifty percent of crime occurs in less than 5 percent of the city’s geography. These high-crime locations can be identified quite narrowly—data analysis can point to clusters of addresses, individual city blocks, and particular intersections. Because conditions in these locations make them attractive to crime, experience shows that crime does not simply shift elsewhere when law enforcement arrives. Rather, focusing law enforcement resources on such areas actually reduces levels of overall crime. Therefore, reducing crime in a small area can impact the crime rate of an entire city.

“Hot-spot” policing is the term used to identify and dedicate ongoing resources to these dangerous areas in an effort to impact a city’s overall crime rate. To successfully implement hot-spot policing, law enforcement must first have access to geographic crime analysis for both recent and long-term crime patterns in order to identify the exact locations chronically plagued by violent crime. Following such analysis, an agency must reorient everyday patrol operations to emphasize the hot spots, routinely visiting the problem areas between calls for assistance.

By focusing on specific addresses, it becomes easier to identify and change some underlying problems that contribute to crime in a locality. Local business owners and apartment complex managers can also serve as an important resource in determining the circumstances that make a geographic area attractive for crime. Small changes, like nuisance abatement or barriers to shift traffic patterns, can also lead to long-term benefits.

**Targeting offenders:** The strategy of focused deterrence – that is, focusing on known high-risk individuals to deter them from committing violent crimes – has had a dramatic impact on lowering a city’s crime rate. This strategy began as part of Boston’s Operation Ceasefire in the late 1990s and is credited with reducing youth homicides *by over sixty percent*.

Using this strategy, high-risk individuals are targeted for interactions with a working group, based on criminal histories, gang membership, and information from community members. The working group consists of state and federal law enforcement and prosecutors, probation and parole officers, researchers, local clergy, and community assistance groups. Breaking down any sense of anonymity these high-risk individuals may enjoy, such individuals are warned of their increased accountability: violence by any

member of his group will result in crackdowns for all, with tougher terms of probation and referrals for federal prosecution whenever possible. At the same time, positive resources are offered, such as social services, drug counseling and employment assistance.

This focused deterrence approach has been recently implemented through Kansas City NOVA (No Violence Alliance) and is the cornerstone of a federal program used by U.S. Attorneys nationwide called Project Safe Neighborhoods.

St. Louis successfully used a similar strategy to hold offenders accountable to community standards by organizing a Neighborhood Accountability Board (NAB) in the Wells-Goodfellow neighborhood. The NAB members were community members, working in concert with city probation and parole officers. When the offender met with the NAB, they were expected to outline their offense and positive steps they were taking to address their behavior. NAB members could specifically address the harm the crimes had on the neighborhood, with the probation or parole officer imposing traditional conditions or sanctions as well as untraditional ones such as attending a 12-step program or providing community service. The Wells-Goodfellow program existed from 2008 to 2010. The City has since developed similar accountability boards in several city neighborhoods, as well as in partnership with the St. Louis County Police Department for a pilot project in Jennings.

When targeting high-risk individuals, law enforcement should also include those with a history of domestic violence. New York City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly noted that domestic violence had been responsible for at least 16% of homicides in that city. To reduce the rate of domestic violence, law enforcement increased the frequency of home visits to victims and utilized an automatic risk assessment program to scan department databases for previous incidents and identify homes with the highest risk of reoccurrence. By dedicating resources to identifying and focusing on these offenders, the city witnessed a 28% reduction in domestic violence homicides in 2012 and predicted another 25% drop for 2013.

When considering new programs, every law enforcement agency is faced with the reality of budgetary considerations. Agencies and city government should explore innovative funding mechanisms to provide additional support for a city's limited resources, such as Social Impact Bonds. In this type of public-private partnership, corporate investors provide working capital to support a nonprofit organization providing specified

services. After a specified time period, the program is evaluated to determine whether it has achieved the identified goal, resulting in savings. If so, the savings are used to repay the original investors. In some instances, the city does not guarantee the bonds, so it has no financial obligation should the program fail. This year, Massachusetts committed \$27 million to a seven-year Juvenile Justice Pay for Success Initiative, targeting at-risk young men in the probation or juvenile justice systems. If the program reaches its goal of reducing incarceration costs, the state predicts savings as high as \$45 million. These savings in turn are to be used for “success payments” to the investors. The state of New York also recently launched a \$13.5 million Social Impact Bond to increase programming targeting employment and recidivism, funded in part by Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

### **RECOMMENDATION NO. 3**

**Law enforcement agencies should continue the adoption of real-time surveillance technologies to deter crime, improve identification of offenders, and reduce response times. The General Assembly should address privacy concerns raised by the use this technology, including the use of license plate readers, to ensure information ascertained by such devices remains secure.**

An important developing resource for law enforcement is the use of technology to aid in gathering criminal justice intelligence. To be truly effective, technologies must be fully integrated and analyzed in a central location. For example, St. Louis and Kansas City are both in the process of developing real-time intelligence centers with the ability to share information with agencies across the state.

Specific technologies proven to be successful in deterring or responding to crime include surveillance cameras, ShotSpotter units, and license plate readers.

**Cameras:** Three important considerations when implementing surveillance cameras are the camera’s physical placement within the community, the cost-benefit analysis of their use, and the need to organize both law enforcement and community support around the instillation of such devices. Cameras are far more effective when placed in areas with a historically high crime rate rather than in areas that have experienced a single, highly publicized crime. Studies have shown that making cameras conspicuous with signs and flashing lights correlates well with a reduction in

overall crime. Allocating additional police resources to areas surrounding the camera coverage will help police locate criminals who have fled or who have otherwise avoided detection by the cameras.

Monitoring the cameras on a 24-hour basis is often key to reducing crime. Dr. Nancy La Vigne, director of the Justice Policy Center of the Urban Institute, concluded that communities see between \$1.50 to \$4.00 in savings for every dollar spent on camera technology. The savings reflect a reduction in court processing costs, jail time, and related expenses. The cost-benefit ratio is even greater when the cameras are monitored through private partnerships, which can reduce the cost of implementation. Memorandums of Understanding may be used to provide use of privately owned camera feeds from existing cameras operated by local businesses. Relevant factors when determining cost of any technology include the cost of training, plus potential hidden costs such as maintenance and upgrades.

**ShotSpotter:** Typically, law enforcement officials respond to gunshots only after receiving a 911 call from someone who saw or heard the shot. Today, police departments can improve their ability to respond by using technology to identify where a gunshot is fired as it happens.

For example, ShotSpotter is a subscription-based technology which provides dispatchers with immediate intelligence, using cameras that are sound-activated. When a gunshot is fired, the camera moves to film the location of the gunshot. The information is sent to dispatchers and responding officers nearly instantaneously, providing more rapid response times to an active crime scene. ShotSpotter is effective in alerting local law enforcement to nine out of ten gunshots, versus only one out of ten gunshots identified by individuals calling 911. While ShotSpotter will not prevent a crime from occurring, it assists law enforcement in quickly securing an area and assisting victims.

**License Plate Readers:** License Plate Readers (LPRs) are cameras which capture a still shot of a vehicle's license plate. The LPRs can work at night through the use of infrared technology. Placing cameras on bridges and state borders would expand law enforcement's effectiveness by capturing information about criminals fleeing the scene of the criminal activity. The St. Louis Police Department maintains information captured by LPRs for six months, pursuant to internal policy.

The Missouri legislature should address privacy concerns currently existing throughout both law enforcement and the general public relating to

LPRs. Currently, it is unclear whether information gathered from LPRs is considered a confidential law enforcement record when not part of an ongoing investigation. Ensuring that LPR records remain confidential will aid law enforcement officials in developing investigations and prevent personal information from being used for purposes unrelated to law enforcement.

While technology is useful, it is not a substitute for officers on the streets. Technology is most effective when intelligence experts analyze data and then can supply timely and accurate information to responding officers at the scene.

**Proposed legislative language:**

650.xxx. 1. Any state or local law enforcement agency using license plate reader technology shall comply with all of the following:

(1) Prior to implementing license plate reader technology, the agency shall adopt a privacy policy to ensure that personally identifiable information is not unlawfully disclosed;

(2) The agency shall retain license plate data captured by license plate reader technology for not more than one hundred and eighty days, except in circumstances when the data is being used as evidence or for all felonies being investigated, including, but not limited to, auto theft, homicides, kidnapping, burglaries, elder and juvenile abductions, and Amber alerts;

(3) The agency shall not sell license plate reader data for any purpose and it shall not make the data available to any agency or person that is not a law enforcement agency or an individual who is not a law enforcement officer. The data may be used by a law enforcement agency only for purposes of locating vehicles or persons when either are reasonably suspected of being involved in the commission of a public offense;

(4) The agency shall monitor the agency's own use of license plate reader data to prevent its unauthorized use;

(5) The agency shall conspicuously post the privacy policy on the agency's internet web site.

2. The governor may withhold state funds appropriated to any law enforcement agency that fails to comply with the provisions of this section.

## **RECOMMENDATION NO. 4**

**To reduce recidivism, law enforcement and local communities should work cooperatively to assist offenders with reentry into society including using reentry courts and employment services.**

Although the reentry process often receives little attention by policy makers, it is a critical factor in preventing recidivism and assisting offenders in becoming a productive member of society. While our visiting experts did not agree on a “one-size fits all” method of handling reentry, the consensus was that any effective program requires the commitment of both law enforcement and the community.

The use of reentry courts and youth employment programs are two examples of cooperative efforts between law enforcement and local communities to address reentry issues.

**Reentry Court:** In Jackson County, 29% of released offenders re-offend within one year of release, and 41% re-offend within 2 years of release. Because of such statistics, local and state authorities worked cooperatively to create the Jackson County Reentry Court, a pilot project to address high rates of recidivism.

The Jackson County Reentry Court is a partnership between the Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office, the 16th Judicial Circuit Court, and Missouri Division of Probation and Parole. It is funded primarily through a Department of Corrections grant.

The Reentry Court targets offenders convicted of class A or class B felonies who have been released from the Missouri Department of Corrections. As part of the program, the participation with the Reentry Court is frequently made a condition of defendant’s parole. One judge is assigned to the Reentry Docket, with ultimate authority to make parole-related decisions. The Reentry Court assists with job placement, skills, transportation, mental health resources, and substance abuse treatment. The program has demonstrated initial positive results.

**Education and Employment Programs:** Not surprisingly, evidence-based research shows that students who complete high school are less likely to engage in crime, and the majority of violent crimes committed by individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 are perpetrated by individuals who have dropped out of school. By establishing truancy courts, a community

emphasizes the importance of high school attendance and provides students the opportunity to acquire life and employment skills.

The Summer Employment Program established by the Chicago Crime Lab targeted high school aged students in high crime areas and assisted those students in gaining employment. The program provided students with a career mentor to assist with job skills and counseling.

Initial research from the program demonstrated positive results: when given the opportunity, the vast majority of the students completed the seven-week program, and many continued their employment after the program's end. A similar program was introduced to St. Louis areas students last summer and those results are equally promising. Of the 200 high school students who participated, fewer than 8% failed to complete the program.

## **RECOMMENDATION NO. 5**

**The General Assembly should consider expanding the membership of the Police Board of the Kansas City Police Department by two additional members, to include board participation by city officials specifically charged with oversight of the city's budget and general services.**

St. Louis marked a historic event the week before the Summit began, transitioning from state to local control of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. With this change, Kansas City has the only remaining state-controlled police board in the United States. In order to expand accountability and transparency to the residents it serves, the board membership should be expanded to include the city's director of finance and director of general services.

The financial solvency and physical operations of the police department have a direct impact on the resources available to fulfill its duties to protect residents. Both new members should report to the board as a whole at each meeting to identify and present issues that could negatively impact department resources.

## Proposed legislative language:

84.350. 1. In all cities of this state that now have, or may hereafter have, three hundred thousand inhabitants and not over seven hundred thousand inhabitants, there shall be, and is hereby established, within and for the cities, a board of police commissioners to consist of four commissioners as provided in section 84.360, together with the mayor of such cities, or whosoever may be officially acting in that capacity, the director of finance for the city, and the director of general services, who shall be [a] voting [member] members of the board. The board shall appoint one of its members as president of the board, and one other member as vice president. The president, or vice president in the absence of the president, shall be the presiding officer of the board and shall act for it when the board is not in session. The commissioners shall be citizens of the state of Missouri and shall have been residents of the respective cities in which they are appointed to serve for a period of four years next preceding their appointment, except the mayor, who shall serve for a term equal to his term of office as mayor. The commissioners shall, except as otherwise specified in this section and section 84.360, hold their offices for four years, and until their respective successors are appointed and qualified. Each commissioner shall receive a salary of two thousand four hundred dollars per annum, payable not less than semimonthly, except that the mayor shall not receive any salary or compensation for his duties as commissioner.

2. The police department of such city may be audited once a year by an independent auditor to be selected by the city's board of police commissioners and approved by the mayor. The police department of such city may be audited at any time by the state auditor or by the auditor of the city. Prior to auditing the police department of such city, the city auditor shall determine which agencies or divisions of the police department would most benefit from performance auditing and notify the board of police commissioners. The city auditor, in conjunction with the board of police commissioners, shall develop a schedule for conducting such audits on such police department agencies or divisions as to not disrupt or interfere with the conduct of police business, the public's safety or the normal course of said auditors' duties or responsibilities for such city.

## **RECOMMENDATION NO. 6**

**Compensation for Missouri's county sheriffs should be on a salary scale similar to those of other county law enforcement officials, instead of based on each county's total assessed valuation.**

Missouri's deputy sheriffs are on the front line of carrying out the criminal justice laws passed by the legislature, but remain trapped in an outdated salary schedule that fails to recognize their increased responsibilities. Pay for sheriffs should be consistent with that of others who serve county criminal justice system, to avoid losing experienced officers to lead these important law enforcement departments.

Sheriffs carry out our state's law enforcement mandate throughout 114 counties of Missouri. They are required to complete necessary training and education to be licensed peace officers. In addition to protecting their communities by arresting criminals and patrolling roads, sheriffs issue concealed carry permits, register sex offenders, provide court security, and execute warrants. Sheriffs also carry both the responsibility and liability of maintaining our state's system of county jails.

Sheriffs' pay across the state varies widely, despite carrying out similar duties. Annual salaries range from \$24,000 in Worth County to \$110,000 in Boone County. Of the 114 county sheriffs, 100 make less than \$65,000 a year, and 35 are paid less than \$45,000. Pay often fails to increase with the cost of living. In Putnam County, the sheriff's salary increased only \$5,000 over the past 17 years.

In many parts of our state, sheriffs are not even paid on a par with their law enforcement counterparts at other levels of government or with police chiefs within the same county, despite patrolling larger areas, managing more employees and bigger budgets. As a result of this disparity, counties face losing qualified sheriffs to higher paying positions in the private sector or other law enforcement agencies.

A sheriff's compensation is currently based solely on that county's total assessed valuations, unlike the salaries of prosecuting attorneys and trial judges. In 1996, the General Assembly, led by Senator Harold Caskey, found a way to lift prosecutors' pay so that it was commensurate with that of an Associate Circuit Judge, without violating the Hancock Amendment. The same result should be achieved for our state's sheriffs. One option would be to link sheriffs' pay to a percentage of that of prosecutors, so that when one arm of

the local criminal justice system experiences a raise in pay, the sheriffs are not left behind.