



## MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Darrell Moore

### **PRESS RELEASE**

June 23, 2020

#### **LETTER URGING GOVERNOR PARSON TO SIGN SB 600**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Darrell Moore

The Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the Missouri Sheriffs' Association, Missouri Police Chiefs' Association, Missouri Fraternal Order of Police, St. Louis Police Officers Association and the Kansas City Fraternal Order of Police have sent a letter to Governor Parson urging him to sign SB 600 as recently Truly Agreed to and Passed by the General Assembly.

A copy of that letter is attached.

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June 19, 2020

Governor Mike Parson  
Missouri Capital Building  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102

Dear Governor Parson:

On behalf of the members of our organizations, we urge you to sign Senate Bill 600 into law. Senate Bill 600 contains many common-sense measures that will help stem the bloodshed in our state, particularly in urban communities like St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield that regularly appear on the lists of America's most dangerous cities. The good, hardworking, law-abiding citizens living in those cities and across Missouri deserve to know that violent criminals will not merely receive a slap on the wrist when they prey on their victims.

Senate Bill 600 *exclusively* addresses violent criminals and career criminals; it *does not* change any laws relating to low-level, nonviolent offenders. Among its measures:

- **Persons convicted of murder will no longer be eligible to be sentenced to probation.** It should be common sense that someone who has been found guilty of intentionally killing another person without legal justification should not be immediately released back into the community.
- **Persons previously convicted of a dangerous felony will be eligible for enhanced punishment if they are later found guilty of illegally possessing a firearm.** We should all be able to agree that dangerous felons should face stiffer sentences if they illegally arm themselves with a firearm.
- **Persons convicted of the crime of armed criminal action will face stiffer sentences.** The vast majority of the violent crimes impacting Missourians—particularly those living in our urban areas—are committed with the use of a firearm or other deadly weapon. Senate Bill 600 ensures that these violent criminals—not nonviolent offenders—receive prison terms that will improve public safety in

those communities.

- **Criminal conspiracies, including those of street gangs, will be prosecuted more successfully.** Senate Bill 600 provides new measures modeled after federal law and many other states that enhance law enforcement agencies' ability to target street gang members or other criminal conspirators in a single indictment, rather than having to try them each individually, thereby saving valuable court resources.

There was a day when even the most progressive criminal justice reform advocates supported these sorts of common-sense measures. They proclaimed loudly that Missouri simply needed to be “smart on crime” and stop sending to prison low-level, nonviolent criminals who we were simply “mad at,” so we could reserve prison cells for violent, career criminals we should rightly be “scared of.” Sadly, common sense seems to have died for those special interest groups working the halls in Jefferson City. Senate Bill 600 exclusively targets the very violent and career criminals that these criminal justice reform PACs have previously agreed needed to go to prison. Yet now those so-called reformers advocate that *even murderers* should not be sentenced to prison.

For decades—well before “criminal justice reform” became a popular catchphrase—our organizations have developed and supported programs intended to divert low-level offenders out of the criminal justice system. By way of just a few examples:

- Prosecutors developed the first drug treatment courts more than 30 years ago, and our organizations have consistently supported bills to add DWI, mental health, and veterans treatments courts in Missouri.
- We supported House Bill 547 last year to formalize programs to divert low-level offenders from the criminal justice system.
- After a decade of working with public defenders and other criminal justice reform supporters, we successfully advocated in 2014 for the enactment of Missouri's first overhaul of its criminal code in decades—a measure that decreased sentences for many nonviolent offenders and dramatically reduced Missouri's prison population.

This year, our organizations also supported the measures contained in House Bill 1450. Like many others, we were disappointed that bill was not also passed by both houses of the Missouri legislature. We supported its provisions, including the funding for a witness protection program and codifying the state's evidentiary rules to permit the admissibility of witness testimony for people who are intimidated from testifying. We will continue to advocate for the passage of those measures in future legislative sessions.

Simply stated, Senate Bill 600 will protect Missourians from the most dangerous and violent criminals in our state. It will not fill our prisons with low-level, nonviolent offenders—because its provisions *only* address violent and serious offenses. Public safety is a core function of government, and the cost of incarceration cannot be a justification for allowing dangerous felons to remain on the streets. Simply put, lives are in the balance. Signing the bill will be a major step forward in helping remove Missouri from the unenviable position of being featured in news stories about America's most dangerous cities. Likewise, vetoing this common-sense bill would unnecessarily subject millions of innocent Missourians to crimes committed by truly violent and dangerous offenders.

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As a former Sheriff yourself, we trust that you will join us in our efforts to improve the safety of our communities.

Sincerely,

Tim Lohmar,  
President  
Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys

Sheriff David Parrish,  
President  
Missouri Sheriffs' Association

Chief Sean Fagan,  
President  
Missouri Police Chiefs' Association

Rick Inghima,  
President  
Missouri Fraternal Order of Police

Jay Schroeder,  
President  
St. Louis Police Officers Association

Brad Lemon,  
President  
Kansas City Fraternal Order of Police