

Police Reform SB168

Over the course of this past summer, I was asked by many individuals and business owners in our capitol city what could be done about violent crime in our community, and as a legislator representing large portions of Indianapolis, if I could provide help in the legislature. The constant reports of murder, shootings, assaults, and other violence had obviously been wearing on the community. I was also asked if it would be possible for me to propose legislation that would allow the Indiana State Police to take over the mile square for policing responsibilities. It was suggested that with the amount of state-owned property, monuments, and the capitol downtown the state had a large interest. I was reminded that Gov. Evan Bayh had sent the Indiana State Police into Gary, Indiana in the 1990's to help suppress the murders and violence in that community.

And there was also much discussion about the lack of enforcement and protection to many businesses in downtown Indianapolis and the inability of the local government to protect the peaceful protestors, and allowing millions of dollars' worth of property damage and the murder of at least three individuals during what turned into a riot last summer.

As a former police officer and longtime resident of Indianapolis, experience tells me we need to look for enhanced ways to build a broader community to work toward the reduction of violence in our capitol city. We need something bold.

As these questions came up, I asked our Legislative Services Agency to help with some research, and I also reached out to law enforcement professionals around the country to look at how other agencies were operating. What we decided was to draft a proposal for Indiana modeled after the Kansas City, Missouri model which is a management board appointed by the Governor.

Historically we often hear of Sir Robert Peel, who is known as the father of modern policing, having established policing originally in England. His model on policing was that of preventing crime, not catching criminals. Peel said that effective departments have low crime rates and that to prevent crime police need to gain public support. That takes leadership. And a quick look at what we have been experiencing in Indianapolis does not indicate low crime rates, and you don't have to be too attentive to hear the outcry regarding the lack of trust in a number of our neighborhoods. That's not to say that the police department has completely lost the confidence of our community, because I don't believe that to

be true, but there are trust issues. And certainly, leadership issues. And I'm not referring to our Chief of Police.

Most of you know that I spent a career in law enforcement here in Indianapolis. I was born here and have raised my family here. I have taught criminal justice at the college level and have lectured as well. I hold three post high school degrees including an MBA. As a police practitioner, I know a little about the subject. My co-author Sen. Scott Baldwin also has served on the Indianapolis Police Department and now runs a successful business. We have spent many hours over the past month or more talking to people in the community; individuals, businessmen and women, law enforcement officers and government representatives at various levels.

I had an opportunity to spend some time on one of our local radio stations, WTLC, on a Sunday morning recently, talking about this proposal. I heard a lot of objections to this and for the first time recognized that some were looking at this as a Republican and Democrat issue. After my part, I stayed with the station and listened for the following hour as citizens and others dialogued about this proposal. It helped me gain a better perspective of what some in our minority community residents were reflecting.

Let me say that I don't and haven't seen this proposal as a "political" issue, but understand why that perception may be there for others. That is not a criticism, only an observation. Can we provide better law enforcement services to our communities? Many of the victims of violent crime are from our minority community. We need a dialogue on this issue, and we know Indiana deserves better.

When this proposal was introduced, we understood that it would meet with opposition. After all, the original proposal was a police management board that would be entirely appointed by our governor. It certainly isn't like any agency structure we've seen in Indiana before. We did meet last month with the governor's staff to review the proposal and to tell them that we had been exploring ways to reach a better system for the appointment process. As with many items in the legislature, a bill is introduced and then you work with a number of people to try to improve and advance it. There have been several recommended changes you can find in, I believe, Amendment #1.

The thought behind the proposal was to place management responsibility under the board and remove the political aspects brought by the City-County Council. Having served on the Council I have witnessed a variety of aspects of Council

participation in police department management. Please don't confuse this and assume I am against citizen participation. I think it is necessary to have citizen participation in police management policy and agency mission. In fact, it's essential.

For a time after retirement from the police department, I served on a fire department merit board representing my community. We were engaged in the hiring, promotion and disciplinary processes of the department. Also, in my prior life as a counselor, I have personally participated along with other citizens in our community and law enforcement officers regarding the development of police discipline issues, and what systems could be brought forward to help identify officers that were deficient in their training and/or conduct; how to measure that; how to remediate it; and when to discipline and/or terminate an employee. For a period of time, I was a member of the council public safety committee.

I report those things to you so you might have some little insight into my breadth of experience. I also go back to Sir Robert Peel, who in 1829 established the London Metropolitan Police Department. Since that time, we have seen many changes and modernization of policing. It is never ending and always attracts important and animated discussions. Often the police professionals are left sitting

on the sideline in the discussion, except for those connected to the political leaders.

Recently, in an article written by Norman E Taylor, President of Global Network for Community Safety, it was noted that “most police leaders in the United States are either directly accountable to an elected mayor and council.” And “In Canadian jurisdiction, Chiefs of police are more typically appointed by and held accountable to civilian oversight boards, operationally arms-length from elected municipal authorities thought still dependent on them for annual funding allocations.”

Taylor noted that in Canada, “Canadian police leaders and their agencies have evolved to a point where they are held much more accountable to the most promising and evidence-based practices that inform their profession than they are to the whims and peculiarities of any elected official or prevailing political regime. In effect, if they see a better path, they will take it, and politicians, for the most part have learned to follow their lead. Taylor went on to wonder if this structure might be achieved in the U.S. due to our culture of “localism.” Can we build a better agency that will address violence and crime in our community while serving all people under a new structure? That’s the question.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Committee let me give you some crime data: 933 people shot; 329 people stabbed with 245 homicides in 366 days in 2020. That is 1,322 people shot or stabbed in 2020.

That is an average of 3.61 people shot or stabbed every day with a person killed every 1.5 days in Indy in 2020.

In 2021, as of Sunday, Valentine's Day, following another mass violence incident Saturday night.
(3 Juveniles/1 Adult)

Brings Indy to at least 138 people shot, 34 people stabbed, with 30 people killed* in 45 days for 2021.

That's 171 people shot or stabbed so far this year.

That makes 30 homicides* in the past 45 days, with the city on pace of 243 homicides for 2021, unless interrupted.

Last week, it was brought to our attention that a number of corporate leaders and others had signed a letter, as I understand, was authored by the Indy Chamber.

Well, I say welcome to the discussion. With the numbers of violent crime in our community the lack of outrage has been deafening. I had the opportunity to talk directly to some of those individuals this past year and enjoyed frank discussions.

I hope their joint letter stimulates more discussion.

We're killing our kids.

These murders of young people are still unsolved.

Have we forgotten Deshaun Swanson 10 years old – 2015

Have we forgotten Roderick Payne Jr, 8 years old – 2020

Have we forgotten Nya Cope 16 years old – 2020

Have we forgotten David Lowery Jr 16 years old – 2020

We have seen progressive violence and crime in the last 5 years, and for me and many others who have sought us out to help find solutions, when is enough just enough?

It has continually been suggested that this is a local issue, and we should leave it to the locals. I am good with that if we can see progress. How are you measuring the success of locals? Does it still take a community to raise a child? Does it take a community to step up and speak up?

There is no plan. A year ago, local elected leaders told the public they had a plan. There was a call for a commission on Criminal Justice Outcomes. It was rejected on political lines. It was reported that the mayor called it ludicrous. People are being slaughtered and there seems to be total apathy at the local level. The violence will do nothing but spread outward. The police are not the problem...the

broken system is. Can it be fixed? Who is leading the discussion? There was a previous local proposal. One political party can't blame the other.

Scott and I have heard from many in the community and I'm bringing their pleas to you. I will take my name off this proposal if one of my colleagues across the aisle will take it up or bring a proposal that will be impactful.