



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

GOVERNOR PARSON ANNOUNCES SPECIAL SESSION TO ADDRESS VIOLENT CRIME IN MISSOURI

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1:30 PM (CST)

Good afternoon and thank you all for being here.

As your Governor and a former law enforcement officer for more than 22 years, protecting our citizens and upholding the laws of our state are of the utmost importance to my administration.

We know we have a serious problem with violent crime here in Missouri that must be addressed. Crime has been a problem in our state long before COVID-19 ... and we have seen it escalate even more in recent weeks, specifically in our big cities.

Just a couple of nights ago, Kansas reached 101 homicides for this year – a 35 percent increase from last year.

Last night, four people were shot and killed in St. Louis, bringing the number of homicides so far this year to 130, compared to 99 at the same time last year.

From May to June alone, data from the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department shows significant increases in reports of violent crime.

In St. Louis County, aggravated assaults with a firearm are up 19 percent year-to-date.

Innocent children are being shot and killed far too often.

These are just the grim numbers ... but the effects of violent crime across our state are best measured in lives – innocent lives lost, futures cut short, and families hurting.

All of this is **UNACCEPTABLE**. We cannot continue to let violent criminals destroy our cities and get away with it. We are better than that in Missouri.

We need to stop worrying about law abiding citizens and start focusing on the real problem of violent crime. We **MUST** hold violent criminals accountable for their actions.

Since last year, my administration has been working to address this issue.



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When St. Louis asked for help last fall, we answered the call by committing state personnel to task forces in the city.

We have worked with the African American community, the clergies, civic and community leaders, law enforcement, and mayors across the state to develop solutions.

By working together, we proposed legislation last year to help fight violent crime and make our communities safer ... and we're very disappointed this didn't get done.

We truly believe that these are tools that could be used in many of the situations we're seeing today, and we are committed to doing everything we can to get this done.

Already, we are taking action. The United States Attorney General Barr recently announced the launch of Operation Legend in Kansas City.

This is a coordinated law enforcement initiative across all federal law enforcement agencies working in conjunction with state and local law enforcement officers to fight the surge of violent crime.

And today, I am calling a special session on violent crime to begin on Monday, July 27th.

Let me be clear ... this call for special session will be narrowly focused on VIOLENT CRIME.

This session will focus on six provisions relating to violent crime, including:

- Endangering the welfare of a child,
- Witness Protection Fund,
- Witness statement admissibility,
- Juvenile certification,
- Unlawful transfer of weapons,
- and police and public safety employee residency requirements for St. Louis.

I want to be clear that violent crime isn't just a St. Louis or Kansas City problem. It is a Missouri problem, and we cannot wait until next session to address it. It must be addressed now ... which is why we are having this special session.



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None of us ... no matter where we're from ... want to see our children being shot in the streets.

That's not who we are in this state. We as parents and grandparents, it's about protecting our children ... it's about protecting our communities.

If the criminal justice system is going to work, ALL parts of it must be in sync. Law enforcement ... prosecution ... AND sentencing. If any of these aren't working right or aren't doing their job, the whole system fails.

The only way we can truly make a difference, fight violent crime, and make our communities safer is by working together. Working together not only at the state level, but also with local agencies ... especially local law enforcement.

If you talk to any county or city police department, there are hundreds of unfilled law enforcement positions ... simply because less and less people want to work in that arena.

People need to understand the sacrifices that law enforcement officers make every day ... especially with everything that's going on in our state right now.

If there was ever a time to stand up for law enforcement, now is the time. They are the front-line response for Missourians. We must support them and give them the respect they deserve ... because we cannot fix this problem without them.

If we are to change violent criminal acts across our state, WE MUST work together, WE MUST do our jobs, and WE MUST support our law enforcement officers.

And WE MUST ... WE MUST start prioritizing the prevention of crime.