



MARION COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

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Mayor Greg Ballard
2501 City-County Building
200 East Washington Street
Indianapolis, In 46204

Re: Funding of Public Safety

Dear Mayor Ballard:

I will be direct and to the point: if we are to continue to flourish as a world-class city, we must find the means to adequately fund public safety. It is imperative that our community have a serious conversation about the future of crime prevention and public safety in Marion County.

For the past several months when meeting with neighborhood associations, faith groups, and other organizations, I have become a broken record with two messages: our public safety agencies are woefully underfunded and, as a community, we must undertake a substantive discussion about how we address this crisis.

I am certainly not alone in decrying the understaffing of our police and fire departments. It has been widely reported that IMPD is critically understaffed. We are nearly 700 officers short of the force we need to be on par with comparable cities. With normal attrition, it is conservatively estimated we will lose 100 additional officers by the end of 2014. With the suggestion that there will not be a recruit class until the end of 2014 at the earliest, that means that there will not be any new IMPD officers until at least mid-2015.

The ripple effects of these staffing deficiencies are as ominous as the direct impact. When officers are stretched thin, it creates additional challenges for our staff, which in turn increases the burden on our judicial system. We rely each day on officers for evidence and testimony in criminal cases. Those officers need time to adequately prepare for court, where convictions of dangerous offenders hang in the balance.

At the Marion County Prosecutor's Office, we already are experiencing the troubling consequences of this trend. At the scene of a recent homicide, our deputy prosecutor was required to supervise the processing of the crime scene because homicide detectives were spread so thin that no one was available to respond immediately to that scene. In the area of traffic policing alone, we have witnessed a significant decrease in traffic enforcement because our

police department simply does not have the manpower to make it a priority. Within the last 30 days, I had a ride-along with officers on the far Northeast side. When officers on the near Eastside were required at the scene of a shooting, the far Northeast officers were dispatched to cover other runs in that near Eastside zone, thus traveling over 12 miles to respond. Patrol officers are literally leap-frogging over each other to simply cover daily dispatch runs throughout the county.

Additional police officers on our streets will not alone alleviate crime in Marion County. On the other hand, the converse is undoubtedly true-- the unabated dwindling of our police force will assuredly diminish the ability to investigate and successfully prosecute such crime.

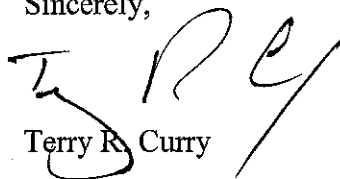
We must discuss short-term and long-term solutions, and time is of the essence. Can we engage other police agencies, such as the Marion County Sheriff's Office, Speedway, Lawrence, Cumberland, Beech Grove, and other police departments, in a more collaborative approach to public safety? Should we enlist the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, the Indianapolis Urban League, and other community organizations in a public discussion regarding public safety?

At the end of the day, the unfortunate reality is that the city and county must find the means to generate sufficient revenue to support fundamental governmental services. Cities and towns across Indiana have been hit hard by the constitutional property tax caps that reduced revenue for municipal services. Our office, like all other city and county agencies, continues to seek efficiencies that will save taxpayer dollars. However, the suggestion that government agencies must continue to construct their annual budgets by cutting expenses and reducing services to match constantly reduced revenue is a shell game which will lead to unacceptable consequences, as is readily apparent with the staffing crisis of our public safety agencies.

Political sniping from both sides of the aisle merely avoids the critical question at hand, and we need to hit the rhetorical reset button. A bipartisan conversation needs to include yourself, members of the City-County Council, myself, and other elected officials, as well as non-elected leaders who work each day in the public safety system. The Marion County Prosecutor's Office is prepared to participate in any such conversation.

I acknowledge that there are no easy answers and readily recognize that public debate on any issue is frequently subject to differing opinions. However, we are at a crisis point. Inaction is simply unacceptable.

Sincerely,



Terry R. Curry

cc: Maggie Lewis