

MEMBER

- Public Safety Committee
- Public Works Committee
- Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee



ROBERT G. DONOVAN

Alderman, 8th District

Administration's no pursuit policy fueling Milwaukee and suburban crime spree

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
July 20, 2015

Today I am again calling on Chief Flynn to rescind the no pursuit policy that was put in place in March 2010.

Five years ago I warned this community (**attached**) about the repercussions of the change in the pursuit policy, and earlier this year I again raised my concerns, going so far as to formally ask that the Chief rescind the policy (**see attached statement and letter**) immediately.

Sadly, a front page article in yesterday's (July 19) *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* ("Gang exploits police policies") has proven me right on this issue. The article's first paragraph reads: "An innovative, violent gang of drug dealers is exploiting the Milwaukee Police Department's on vehicle pursuits and other rules as they feed an incessant hunger for heroin across southeastern Wisconsin and contribute to a surging number of murders in the city..."

This is completely and totally unacceptable!

The article reveals that the no pursuit policy is fueling a thriving mobile drug trade in Milwaukee, where heroin and cocaine dealers can make up to **\$11,000 per day** just by driving around and making transactions from vehicles. The vehicles offer a safe haven of sorts, specifically because of the no pursuit policy.

The article notes specifically how the no pursuit-aided mobile drug trade boon also brings with it associated violence – including robberies, shootings and homicides. Sources say many individuals are coming up from Chicago to spread their poison and to commit crimes.

This community can ill afford to have people coming in from other cities and exploiting our failed policies.

-More-

Data from my sources shows the following increases in Milwaukee crime from 2010 to 2014:

- Gun crimes – up 72%
- Violent crime (all) – up 25%
- Auto theft – up 53%
- Aggravated assaults – up 29%
- Robberies – up 20%
- Arrests (all) – down 34%
- Drug arrests – down 40%
- Juvenile arrests – down 35%
- Felony arrests – down 20%
- 10% drop in traffic stops and an even more severe decline in ticketing
- 13% increase in vehicle crashes
- On pace for 70 traffic fatalities in 2015 & dozens of pedestrian deaths
- In 2015 we are on pace for 15,093 crashes – 30% increase from 2010

For these reasons and more, I am again publicly calling on the Chief (and the mayor, if need be) to rescind the no pursuit policy and allow our officers to do their jobs. If that isn't enough, then for God's sake do it for the safety of the law-abiding citizens of Milwaukee (who deserve better!).

-30-

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

April 7, 2015

Ald. Bob Donovan
(414) 708-9417

MEDIA ADVISORY

Alderman Donovan asks for change in MPD vehicle pursuit policy

Current 'no chase' policy is emboldening criminals, Alderman Donovan says

Alderman Bob Donovan has sent a letter (**attached**) to Chief Edward Flynn asking that the chief rescind the Milwaukee Police Department's current policy on vehicle pursuits. The alderman said the current policy, put in place by Chief Flynn in 2010, is having a negative effect on public safety across the city. Mayor Tom Barrett, MPD Chief of Staff Joel Plant, and members of the Fire and Police Commission were copied on the letter.

Alderman Donovan said police sources have indicated to him that in the first three months of 2015 alone, approximately 750 instances where vehicles would have been pursued under the former pursuit policy have occurred. "These criminals are literally thumbing their noses and flipping off officers as they drive off, knowing that officers will not pursue them," the alderman said.

In the letter, Alderman Donovan writes: "Incidents of vehicle theft have risen alarmingly on the near south side in recent months and police officers inform me that this is due in large part to thieves knowing that they will not be pursued. Frankly, this outcome was as predictable as it is logical and I said so publicly at the time this directive was issued. Further, I need not remind you of the deaths, injuries, and accidents that have resulted from this rise in vehicle thefts."

-30-

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

VICE CHAIR

- Public Works Committee

MEMBER

- Anti-Graffiti Policy Committee
- Judiciary and Legislation Committee



ROBERT G. DONOVAN
Alderman, 8th District

April 7, 2015

Chief Edward M. Flynn
Milwaukee Police Department
749 W. State St.
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Dear Chief Flynn,

I write this letter to request that you rescind your March 2010 change to the Milwaukee Police Department's vehicle pursuit policy.

I know that your decision to require that officers have probable cause that a violent felony has been committed before they may engage in pursuit was made with the best of intentions. I further know that much has been made of the minor decrease in the number of officer-involved traffic accidents caused by pursuit since this directive was implemented. What neither you nor the media has been willing to acknowledge, however, is the high cost of this policy to public safety and order.

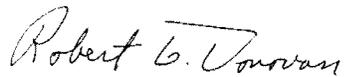
Incidents of vehicle theft have risen alarmingly on the near-South Side and across all of Milwaukee in recent months and police officers inform me that this is due in large part to thieves knowing that they will not be pursued. Frankly, this outcome was as predictable as it is logical and I said so publically at the time this directive was issued. Further, I need not remind you of the deaths, injuries, and accidents that have resulted from this rise in vehicle thefts. These incidents will never be weighed in the balance against the small decrease in officer-involved traffic accidents of which so much has been made.

I also wonder about the effect on public order and force morale when officers are mocked by offenders who know they will not – cannot – be pursued. I have it on good authority that, in the first three months of 2015 alone, there have been more than 750 instances in which officers would have pursued a suspected offender

under the old policy but were forbidden from doing so under your March 2010 directive. This does not, cannot, and will not provide for a safe community.

You have long prided yourself on running a department driven by data. This is commendable. I would ask that you look at the evidence assembled over the last five years and tell me what you see. To me, there is no question that the present circumstances prove that the March 2010 pursuit directive was a mistake that should be undone before it causes even more harm.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert G. Donovan".

Robert G. Donovan
Alderman, 8th District

Cc: Mayor Tom Barrett
Chief of Staff Joel Plant
Members of the Fire & Police Commission

New MPD Pursuit Policy Takes Discretion Away from Police Officers, Alderman Donovan Says

Statement of Ald. Bob Donovan March 29, 2010

I'm having a hard time accepting the Milwaukee Police Department's new vehicle pursuit policy, which requires police officers to establish probable cause that a violent felony has occurred before they can give chase to a driver who is fleeing (refusing to stop for a police vehicle that has activated its lights and siren). This change, made by Chief Edward Flynn and announced internally on Friday (March 26), is a huge one for officers who must make split-second decisions sometimes involving dangerous criminals – many of whom are desperate not to go back to jail or prison.

Before this change, an officer arriving at an armed robbery scene would be allowed to pursue a vehicle he or she observed driving quickly away from the scene. The officer's reasonable suspicion that someone involved in the robbery might be inside the vehicle was enough to initiate the pursuit.

Now, that same officer must only consider going after a possible suspect or suspects if the crime in question is a violent felony. Even then, they must observe something – a mask, a weapon, a specific vehicle or clothing description – that gives that officer probable cause to take part in a pursuit if the driver does not willingly pull over.

So now, if a burglary suspect or drug dealer jumps in a vehicle and refuses to stop for a patrol car, he'll be able to take off and get away because the crime was not a violent felony. You can bet that very few of these scumbags will be hitting the brake pedal when they get lit up by MPD – they'll be pushing the accelerator down hard because they know the cops won't pursue.

This change also takes the discretion out of the hands of our officers. Our officers go through intense training, commit themselves to professional standards, and even take a sworn oath to serve and protect, yet we apparently can't trust them to make proper pursuit judgments? Our officers really want to get bad people off the street – that's one of the key motivators for many of them each and every day! This change sends a poor message, reminding me almost of something we'd expect from the (Chief) Art Jones era, and I fear that it will cause possible serious morale problems down the road.

But what really gets me is that this change comes at a time when we can ill afford to give criminals any slack. Why? Because by this summer we'll be facing almost 300 officer vacancies, not to mention thousands of inmates will be roaming our streets thanks to an early release initiative brought to us by Governor Doyle. And right now we have such a shortage of MPD detectives, uniformed officers are taking on detective work (in addition to their regular assignments).

Lastly, I would like to know where the outrage is in our community about this (change)? I support Chief Flynn on nearly everything he does, but we part company when it comes to this change. We have people turning somersaults because Milwaukee had 72 homicides in 2009 (instead of 100). But Minneapolis only had 19 last year!

Have we really lowered our standards that much? Am I the only one wondering about the answer to that question?

###