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Skyrocketing auto thefts a symptom of larger issues

Ald. Donovan blames officer shortage, no pursuit policy and lenient courts

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan November 4, 2015

It's a shame when the only attention brought to bear on Milwaukee's skyrocketing auto theft crisis happens when people in the downtown area or on the east side are victimized.

Of course I'm referring to last night's reported thefts of three vehicles from the valet lot at Bacchus restaurant on E. Wells St. at the Cudahy Tower Apartments.

But the truth is that over the past several years Milwaukee has seen a huge increase in auto thefts **across the city**. According to the FBI (uniform crime statistics), the city saw an increase in auto thefts of 54% from 2010 to 2014.

According to city COMPASS and MPD statistics comparing the period of January 1 to July 31, 2010 to January 1 to July 31, 2015, seven out of the city's 15 aldermanic districts have seen **triple digit increases** in auto thefts:

- 5th District (northwest side) – 223%
- 9th District (northwest side) – 106%
- 11th District (southwest side) – 214%
- 12th District (near south side) – 156%
- 13th District (south side) – 117%
- 14th District (Bay View) – 133%
- 3rd District (east side) – 63%
- 8th District (near south side) – 251%

It's been so bad in my (8th) district, in fact, that I contacted Sheriff Clarke to see if he could help with the problem in my district. Thank God he was, and he did deploy some deputies (who MPD cops love working with because they ARE able to chase suspects).

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Why the ridiculous increase in auto thefts in Milwaukee?

I place the blame once again on the MPD's no pursuit policy, which emboldens the thieves to run amok. I also blame the shortage of MPD officers, who are stretched to their limits and too often start their shifts with a backlog of calls to look into.

And sadly, I again also blame our lenient courts, where judges (and to an extent the District Attorney's Office) are simply not doing enough to put away these criminals.

In my opinion, judges and the courts need to weigh the havoc and severe disruption auto thieves are causing in the community. Quite simply, losing a vehicle – a lifeline for so many people – to auto thieves can mean losing a job, not being able to get to school, or not being able to care for a loved one.

The sad truth is that whether stealing a minivan outside a south side apartment complex – or a Mercedes parked outside a posh downtown restaurant – these individuals need to be held accountable for their criminal behavior.