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ROBERT G. DONOVAN

ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

Kansas City, KS reverses pursuit policy to address “skyrocketing crime”

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
May 15, 2017**

On Friday the Public Safety Committee will be discussing the Milwaukee Police Department’s pursuit policy, and the topic could not be timelier.

In Kansas City, Kansas, the police department recently reversed its pursuit policy – going from a restraint-driven policy that went into place in 2014 after two innocent people were killed there in incidents involving police chases – back to a policy meant to target and stop criminals.

Starting next month, ALL drivers who flee traffic stops in Kansas City, Kansas will be pursued by police.

Kansas City, Kansas Police Chief Terry Zeigler was quoted in a media report about why the policy switch was necessary: “We’re going in the wrong direction, and it’s time for us to change that.”

Chief Zeigler and Kansas City, Kansas get it – why can’t Milwaukee also get it?!

Chief Flynn made the switch in Milwaukee in 2010 to a pursuit policy that allows officers to initiate a vehicle pursuit only under very limited circumstances. A fleeing vehicle must first be tied to a violent felony, and if it is not, no pursuit can be initiated. I spoke out strongly against the change when it was made, and my position today is unchanged. In fact, today Milwaukee’s streets feel less safe and criminals are more emboldened because of the MPD pursuit policy.

In Milwaukee, the switch to a pursuit policy based on restraint may have been put in place with the best of intentions, to better protect innocent civilians and to enhance officer safety, but in my view (and in the opinion of MANY others) it has actually made crime worse in our city, and it’s made everyday life less safe for our citizens.

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Every day in Milwaukee we are seeing brazen acts of reckless driving, blatant red light running, speeding, and aggressive vehicle moves that put lives in danger. Too often, drivers pull away and flee from police vehicles because those drivers know that there won't be a pursuit. It has become almost laughable for these drivers.

It is time for Milwaukee to take a lesson from Kansas City, Kansas. It's time for Milwaukee to start enforcing our laws, and to let our police officers do the work that they've been sworn to do.

We cannot continue to let criminals run wild on our streets. We need to do what's best for our citizens and our great city, and that means going back to Milwaukee's original (previous) pursuit policy.

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