

Statement of Ald. Bob Donovan

July 15, 2008

First I want to commend the Milwaukee Police Department for indentifying and verifying that the three suspects in the July 4 quadruple homicide are, in fact, the perpetrators of this brutal and deadly attack that has shaken Metcalfe Park and our fine city. Our officers and detectives – as always – accomplished what many other agencies wouldn't have been able to accomplish in the same time frame, and they did it under great public and internal pressure. My hat is off to them.

But I must also comment on what I see as a disturbing sidebar to this case.

After receiving a tip that the suspects arrested in the July 4 quadruple homicide case were known criminals with lengthy records, I asked for and reviewed some of the online court records of each of the three men. I was appalled to find out the serious past crimes they committed apparently weren't enough to keep them behind bars.

In fact, in most cases their jail sentences were stayed and they were placed on probation, meaning they were free to roam the streets – probably armed with guns – to commit more crimes.

If “felon in possession of a firearm” isn't serious, then what is? I thought there were billboards and ads on buses a few years back warning felons about the stiff sentences they faced if caught with a firearm. It's a felony that warrants prison time, in my book, and if Judge Kuhnmuench had sentenced Antonio Williams to the five years he faced back on that charge in 2004, maybe he wouldn't have been out on N. 28th St. armed with an SKS rifle early on July 4th.

If a person commits a crime they need to be held accountable. These men haven't been held accountable – just look at the online court records for yourself. In fact, I believe our court system has failed this county and the good, tax-paying citizens of this community.

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We call our system the “criminal justice system,” but where is the justice for our citizens who must live in fear because they know there are guys like these who are roaming their neighborhoods dealing drugs, robbing and mugging people, and breaking into homes?

Where is the justice for our police officers who risk their lives daily going after these men, chasing them around our streets when they should be sitting in a cell where they can endanger no one?

Where is the justice for our taxpayers who must reach ever deeper into their wallets to pay for the rising costs of public safety – in part because we have judges who can’t seem to keep these thugs in jail or prison?

And, while we’re at it, where was the justice for former Milwaukee Police Capt. Glenn Frankovis – a good, smart, dedicated officer – who was fired for calling guys like these “thugs” when – at the end of the day – that’s an appropriate descriptive.

Lastly, instead of studying the racial disparities of those incarcerated in our state prisons, perhaps Governor Doyle should think about studying why we aren’t making criminals serve their sentences and why we’ve instead decided it’s OK to place dangerous criminals on probation so they can be back on our streets plying their trade and passing on their “skills” to the next generation.

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