

## Bail Reform Will Help Fight Violent Crime

As a state senator, I've worked alongside our law enforcement officers, on legislation and also on ride-alongs. I've spent time with the Wisconsin State Patrol and several county sheriff's departments across Central Wisconsin. Nothing that I'd seen though, could prepare me for the day I spent with the Milwaukee Police Department last summer. I saw the victim of a homicide – one of 224 people killed in Milwaukee in 2022 – and I was there later that day when the officers responded to shots fired. While it's a day I'll never forget, it has unfortunately become all too common for our officers. That's why I support a constitutional amendment to reform our bail system.

Recent statistics from Milwaukee indicate that nearly twenty percent of those suspected of attempting or committing murder were out on bond for a different felony. Even worse, some of these individuals purchased their freedom with only a signature or a few hundred dollars.

Currently, the Wisconsin Constitution prohibits judges and court commissioners from considering a number of factors when determining whether to impose cash bail. Some might say that's just how the system works. I say it's a good example of a system that doesn't work – especially in the wake of the Waukesha Christmas parade tragedy where Darrell Brooks, who was out on bail, killed six people and injured sixty-two others.

The proposed constitutional amendment unties the hands of our justice system by allowing courts to set conditions of release to prevent serious harm to the public and enabling courts to consider all of the circumstances surrounding a crime. This would include its seriousness, previous convictions of the accused, the probability that the defendant will appear in court, and the need to prevent witness intimidation when setting cash bail.

To become part of the state constitution, an amendment must pass both houses of the legislature in consecutive sessions. This amendment has done so, picking up votes from members of both parties along the way. Now all that's needed for adoption is to win approval from the voters in this spring's election on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Dangerous people should not be allowed to buy the opportunity to strike again.