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The Legislature’s Lack of Action is Shameful

(MADISON)—Today, Senator Tim Carpenter issued the following statement regarding the Special Session on the Use of Force by Law Enforcement scheduled for noon today:

“Three months ago, after George Floyd was murdered during the course of an arrest, the Wisconsin Legislative Black Caucus had asked for a special session to reform the justice system, and especially police policies, in Wisconsin. Their call went unheeded, under the premise that a dialog would begin and legislation would be produced to address these concerns.

“In June, Governor Evers circulated 9 bills as items that he wanted to see debated among the Legislature and that he would sign into law, each addressing a different aspect of police interactions with the public and the administration of police departments. After the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, it became clear that action was not being considered among the Majority party of the Legislature.

“After 2 months, there had been ample time for all parties to have a chance to provide input on these bills, and for all of these bills to go through the full process with a public hearing. But the public has not had an opportunity to weigh in on these issues because none of the Judiciary, Public Safety, Criminal Justice, and Corrections committees of the State Senate and Assembly have not convened since March 17th.

“Given how much time has been available to vet these bills, I had expected that the State Legislature would convene today in order to debate and vote on them. It should not take an emergency to motivate the Legislature into action. We have witnessed these issues and have been preparing solutions for months—other bills looking to address social and criminal justice issues have been ignored for years.

“Regardless, the Republican Caucus decided to not even show up for the special session. Instead they directed the Senate Chief Clerk, a nonpartisan civil servant, to take the heat for them by showing up to do his job and handling their affairs while they continued campaigning.”

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