

January 28, 2022

Dear Senator Bean,

We as members of the law enforcement community in your district are writing to ask you to oppose any attempts to pass Senate Bill 666. Senate Bill 666 would be a disaster for public safety and would make the already incredibly difficult task of bringing violent offenders to justice nearly insurmountable.

Self-defense law in the State of Missouri, in its current form, already places a burden on the State of convincing a jury of twelve people that the defendant did not act in self-defense beyond a reasonable doubt. That is a burden that we gladly accept; however, Senate Bill 666 attempts to short circuit the jury trial system and keep honest citizens from making decisions about the guilt or innocence of violent criminals in their own communities. This bill places those decisions in the hands of politically elected or appointed judges. Jury trials offer the voice of the people to the criminal justice system and this bill attempts to keep honest citizens out of this process.

If Senate Bill 666 passes, victims of violent crimes will be drug into court a minimum of four times to testify and several more times for bond hearings and depositions. The pre-trial immunity hearings that this bill creates will require the state to have a mini trial at the outset of a criminal case, then a preliminary hearing, bond hearing, another mini trial in circuit court, another bond hearing, depositions, and a ultimately a jury trial. It will cause significant delays in the cases involving violent criminals, giving defense attorneys multiple opportunities to cross examine and harass victims of crimes and will ultimately result in many victims tiring of the process and becoming uncooperative. Victims have rights too.

This bill also shifts the burden of injecting the issue of self-defense from the defense to a presumption that every single assault that ever occurs in the entire State of Missouri is a result of self-defense. It is then the State's automatic burden (under this bill) to negate the same. There is good reason that the justification of self-defense must be injected by the defendant, because in nearly every murder case the only other witness to what happened is dead. So under this bill, the defendant would never have to say a word, never be subjected to cross-examination and could be acquitted based on self-defense because the State's witness (the victim) is dead and can not tell their side of the story.

One of the most concerning things about the bill is the absolute immunity that this bill creates for violent offenders. If Senate Bill 666 passes, officers would be barred from arresting someone for any violent offense where they claim self-defense. It would also trigger civil penalties for officers and prosecutors that are doing their jobs to bring these violent offenders to justice. This would result in officers acting out of an abundance of caution and leaving violent criminals on the streets. Further, the immunity provision in this bill will create absurd scenarios where offenders who are engaged in buying and selling drugs are protected when a drug deal goes wrong and someone dies. Criminals who are caught in the act of burglarizing someone's home would be granted immunity when they are met with force from the homeowner. This immunity extends to all assaults and homicides, not just ones involving firearms.

Violent crime in Missouri has risen significantly in recent years. Rather than taking steps to give law enforcement the tools that we need to bring violent criminals to justice, some Missouri legislators seriously entertain a bill that will make sure violent criminals have yet another advantage and law enforcement one less. In a time when Washington D.C. has conversations about defunding police and stripping law enforcement officers of their immunity, politicians in Jefferson City are actually pursuing bills such as Senate Bill 666, which does exactly that. The self-defense law in Missouri is not broken. It has worked time and time again. Please do not vote for Senate Bill 666, already referred to as, "The Make Murder Legal Act."

Very Respectfully,

The Law Enforcement Community of Southeast Missouri

/s/ Danny H. Whiteley, Poplar Bluff Chief of Police  
/s/ Kacey L. Proctor, Butler County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Mark Dobbs, Butler County Sheriff  
/s/ Wesley L. Popp, Chief Deputy, Butler County Sheriff's Department  
/s/ Russell Oliver, Stoddard County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Nicholas Jain, Dunklin County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Bob Holder, Dunklin County Sheriff  
/s/ Andrew Lawson, New Madrid County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Joshua Tomlin, Pemiscot County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Dustin Boyer, Carter County Sheriff,  
/s/ Mark Welker, Cape Girardeau County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Danny Hicks, SEMO Cyber Crimes Task Force Commander  
/s/ Darron Moore, Captain Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Jarrett Bullock, Malden Chief of Police (RET)  
/s/ James McMillen, Chief of Sikeston Department of Public Safety  
/s/ Wes Blair, Cape Girardeau Chief of Police  
/s/ Kenny Wilson, Kennett Chief of Police  
/s/ Bobby Hearnese, Charleston Chief of Police  
/s/ Claire E. Poley, Mississippi County Prosecuting Attorney  
/s/ Bud Cooper, New Madrid County Sheriff  
/s/ Hank Trout, Dexter Chief of Police  
/s/ Shaun Prenger, Patrolman, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Kenny Carpenter, Patrolman, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Joey Woodruff, Detective, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Drew Juden, Chief of Sikeston Department of Public Safety (RET)  
/s/ Ritchie Phillips, Patrolman, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Chuck Harris, Sergeant, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ James Henry, CPL., Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Carl Hefner, Stoddard County Sheriff  
/s/ Mike McClain, Deputy Chief of Police, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Bob Moore, Captain, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Daniel Mustain, Detective, Poplar Bluff Police Department  
/s/ Richard Stephens, Carter County Sheriff (RET)  
/s/ Jeff Rolland, Deputy Chief, Poplar Bluff Police Department (RET)  
/s/ Donald P. Trout, Deputy Chief, Poplar Bluff Police Department (RET)  
/s/ Hannah Pender, Carter County Prosecuting Attorney