

Rep. Taylor: No winners in Tony Robinson Tragedy, but there is a way forward

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MADISON, WI – In 2015, Tony Robinson was shot and killed by Madison Police Officer Matt Kenny. Yesterday, Tony's family settled a lawsuit against the city for \$3.35 million. Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison) issued the following statement:

"I send my heartfelt sympathy to the friends and family of Tony Robinson, who have experienced immeasurable grief. No amount of money will ever mitigate their loss, or assuage the deep hurt, sadness and anger that has engulfed those touched by this tragedy.

"Clearly, there are no winners in this tragedy, only loss. But there is a way forward. We must address the deeply rooted racial injustice that plagues our community and state.

"Tony's death and the deaths of two other individuals who were killed in an officer-involved shooting since 2012, should motivate all sectors of our community to work towards reforms that not only improve the investigatory and legal processes that follow officer-involved deaths, but prevent these deaths from occurring.

"While Wisconsin passed unprecedented legislation in 2014 requiring that outside detectives lead investigations of officer-involved deaths, this law was a first step, not a last. We need more reforms to ensure that this process is fair, independent and transparent. We must adopt a conflict of interest standard to ensure that the outside investigators do not have close ties to the officer or department involved.

Further, a special prosecutor should review criminal reports of officer-involved deaths, make charging decisions and prosecute cases. This safeguard would remove potential conflicts faced by District Attorneys in deciding whether or not to charge a law enforcement individual with whom they need to maintain a professional relationship.

“But more importantly, we need to make sure we are doing everything possible to prevent these tragedies in the first place. We must reform law enforcement use of force standards as recommended by legal experts, and law enforcement organizations and professionals. Police departments throughout our country have reduced incidents of lethality and enhanced community and officer safety by adopting policies that 1) affirm the duty of law enforcement to preserve life; 2) permit deadly force only as a last resort; and 3) require that the minimum amount of force be used when addressing a threat and, whenever possible, that de-escalation tactics be employed. These principles should form the bedrock of every use of force policy in our state.

“I know that we can make progress together in ensuring these situations happen less frequently. Adopting further reforms will save lives, which is the goal we all share. We must act now.”

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