

# Rep. Bowen: Statement on shooting of Jacob Blake

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MILWAUKEE – In response to yesterday’s shooting of Jacob Blake by police in Kenosha, State Rep. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) released the following statement:

“Another day, another name in a hashtag. Another police department, another example of excessive use of force against an unarmed Black person. I was a community organizer when Trayvon Martin was murdered. I was running for County Board when Rekia Boyd was murdered. I was first running for Assembly when Dontre Hamilton was shot 14 times and killed, when Eric Garner was choked to death, when Mike Brown was gunned down, and had just been elected when Tamir Rice had his life cut short for the crime of being a Black child playing in a park. The years pass on, and the list of names continues to grow. The calls for ‘reform’ continue to sound from the same corners, the same dedication to incrementalism. And all the while, the list of names grows longer, the trail of Black and Brown bodies left by police grows, and nothing actually happens. Jacob Blake, thank God, is alive, but his situation highlights the change we need to see. He was attempting to take care of his community and prevented violence from escalating, yet he was made out to be the problem.

I am tired of talk. I am tired of ‘well, these things move slowly.’ What more do leaders need to see? How many more task forces, work groups, or commissions have to research the already-researched and short-sighted reforms that don’t actually do anything? How much longer are we expected to wait for accountability? We have been fighting these battles for centuries! It is time for action! It is time for legislation that will protect the lives of those in our communities who currently live in fear of an unjust system! It is time to dismantle oppressive systems that criminalize and persecute people of color for simply trying to live their lives! It is time to build a new future, where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Dream and

other significant achievements of Black Civil Rights leaders of the 60's are not just trotted out when needed as feel-good props, but actually describe the reality that exists in our daily lives!

To my Republican colleagues: stop slowing down the legislative process with your control. Stop blocking attempts at meaningful policy change because you've never personally witnessed or experienced abuses by the police. Stop thinking "other issues" affecting communities of color need to be fixed first before we implement accountability on law enforcement because truthfully they are interconnected. Start listening, with open ears and open hearts. Talk to your colleagues of color who have lived these struggles their whole lives. Come talk to me about why this issue is personal; why this issue hits close to home; why every single Black man and woman in America knows that every single interaction with a police officer carries with it a risk of ending up in a hospital bed in critical condition, enduring to make it back home, or being killed in front of your children even if you do follow the rules.

And to my Democratic colleagues: prove that 'Black Lives Matter' is more than just a slogan, a sign or a t-shirt. Be a leading example in your urgency. Be vocal, be present, listen to your Black & Brown colleagues and communities of color. Accept bold proposals to redefine public safety into something that is holistic and healing, rather than constantly focusing on punishment and incarceration. When you are in predominantly white-run spaces, continue to advocate for Black and Brown lives and be true accountable allies. Our issues are your issues, just as your issues are our issues.

We are at a turning point. This is our watershed moment. Talk has never been cheaper. Let's act and pass the 9 bills the Governor brought forth, and then consider all the measures that we know will save lives. Let's finally get to work, together."