

Dept. of Justice: AG Kaul announces \$115 million Safer Wisconsin legislative package

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today announces Safer Wisconsin, a [comprehensive legislative package](#) to reduce crime and support stronger communities.

For years, many communities have faced underinvestment in vital services, and the pandemic has led to increased isolation, interrupting and otherwise straining the services that are available. Amid these circumstances and the other challenges resulting from the pandemic, there has been a nationwide spike in shootings, homicides, and overdose deaths.

AG Kaul is calling on the Wisconsin state legislature to take significant steps toward safer communities across Wisconsin by investing \$115 million—a portion of the state's surplus—in public safety and making new and previously introduced statutory changes.

"We must take swift, concrete action to reduce crime and strengthen communities," said Attorney General Kaul. "By fighting gun violence and other violent crime, bolstering our efforts to address the opioid epidemic, and investing in our communities rather than starving them of resources, we can make all of Wisconsin safer."

If enacted, Safer Wisconsin will strengthen community trust and prevent crime, help keep guns out of the hands of people who've been shown to be dangerous, address substance use disorder and mental health crises, and help hold offenders accountable.

- **Strengthening community trust and preventing crime.** Safer Wisconsin proposes significant investments in community policing and prosecution, violence prevention programs, victim services, and re-entry programs that reduce recidivism. It also would provide additional funding for law enforcement training and ongoing state funding for the Office of School Safety and the Safe at Home program, which assists people in staying safe through address confidentiality.

- **Keeping guns out of the hands of people who've been shown to be dangerous.** Gun violence has been the primary driver of the spike in homicides in Wisconsin during the pandemic. Safer Wisconsin would expand background checks, prohibit ghost guns, increase the felony classification for repeat felon-in-possession and straw purchasing offenses, and authorize judges to issue extreme risk protection orders.

- **Addressing Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Crises.** Safer Wisconsin would expand treatment and diversion programs, including by facilitating the creation of mental health and veterans courts, expand substance use disorder treatment in prisons and jails, provide ongoing funding for regional drug prosecutors, and invest in crisis response teams to enable communities to respond more effectively when people are experiencing mental health crises.

- **Holding offenders accountable.** Safer Wisconsin includes several proposals that would help in holding offenders accountable, including reforms that would ensure that sexual assault kits are submitted to the state crime labs, updating state law regarding obstruction of justice, the creation of a hate crime hotline, investing in violent crime investigators and prosecutors at DOJ, and creating a grant program to support officer recruitment and retention programs.

A summary table of policies in [Safer Wisconsin](#) can be found [here](#).

In addition, due to federal maintenance of effort requirements included in the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), passage of this proposal would also result in an investment of \$91,320,000 in new funding for education.

Press release: [https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/ag-kaul-announces-115-million-safer-wisconsin-legislative--package](https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/ag-kaul-announces-115-million-safer-wisconsin-legislative-package)