

Rep. Bowen: Statement on John Doe charging decision against Joseph Mensah

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MILWAUKEE – In response to the decision by Milwaukee County Judge Glenn Yamahiro finding probable cause to charge former Wauwatosa police officer Joseph Mensah with homicide by negligent use of a weapon after conducting a John Doe proceeding into the 2016 killing of Jay Anderson, Jr. by Mensah, State Rep. David Bowen (D-Milwaukee) released the following statement:

“Today’s groundbreaking decision by Judge Yamahiro is a win for the family, loved ones of Jay Anderson, Jr., for the ongoing grassroots movement to hold police responsible for their deadly actions, and for justice. Joseph Mensah *should* have been charged in this case years ago, but today’s decision marks a step towards correcting that grave error, and ensuring that Mensah is held accountable in a court of law. I have previously raised concerns about the credibility of Officer Mensah in these cases, and I feel vindicated to see those concerns validated by Judge Yamahiro in this proceeding. I encourage fellow members of the legislature to read the transcripts of today’s impartial decision.

This decision also highlights the urgent need for continued and meaningful criminal justice and police reform that has been obstructed. Judge Yamahiro’s comments today made it very clear that, as advocates we’ve partnered with have pointed out for years, the cozy relationship between police officers and district attorneys can stand in the way of unbiased charging decisions when law enforcement officers are involved. Judge Yamahiro’s order that a special prosecutor be appointed for this case is an important step forward, and it is a precedent that deserves to be instituted for *all* cases involving law enforcement officers that result in the death of a suspect. Furthermore, Judge Yamahiro pointed out just how inadequate

Wisconsin's policies on investigating deaths involving law enforcement officers are, and how police departments are not up to the task of truly investigating members of neighboring law enforcement agencies in a neutral manner.

I must say that I completely agree with Judge Yamahiro's comments. And to that end, I am proud to have introduced my "Enough Is Enough" police reform package of bills along with Rep. Hong, including a bill that would require special prosecutors in cases of officer-involved killings, another bill that would increase transparency and create higher bars for police departments investigating other law enforcement agencies in cases of officer-involved killings, and many other policies that would help increase accountability, transparency and rebuild public trust in law enforcement.

Today's decision makes it even more clear than it already was: for a great future for all, Wisconsin needs to see real, meaningful police reform without obstructionists holding us all back, and we *must* have the opportunity to pursue substantive solutions like those in our package already supported by advocates and law enforcement leaders. Solutions that Speaker Vos and Rep. Steineke have purposely ignored & hindered from becoming law. The time for change is now! I pray my colleagues are listening."