

Sen. Jacque: Public safety package clears Assembly

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Bills back local law enforcement, keep violent felons with guns off the street

MADISON, WI... The State Assembly yesterday passed a package of bills to protect public safety by increasing funding to put more trained police officers on the street, and by requiring prosecutors to charge violent felons for illegal possession of a firearm.

State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), co-author of the measures, said the bills strengthen the legal safeguards designed to keep us safe, at a time when Wisconsin is seeing a significant increase in crime, with homicides doubling in Green Bay and Madison.

“Unfortunately, as crime is on the rise, the number of officers on our streets is at the lowest level in at least a decade,” Sen. Jacque said. “This package aims to reverse this trend through investments in recruitment of new law enforcement officers to the State of Wisconsin.”

Sen. Jacque said many of the initiatives would be funded through federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies, which under the law, may be used to improve public safety:

[Assembly Bill 841](#), co-authored with Rep. Chuck Wichgers (R-Muskego), aims to reduce firearm crimes by requiring court approval before a prosecutor could simply dismiss charges or defer prosecution for illegal firearm possession by violent felons.

Unfortunately, it was recently discovered that three-quarters of felons arrested for unlawful possession of a gun in Milwaukee County saw no prison time as a consequence of that arrest, and prosecutors never even filed charges in 37% of those cases.

[Assembly Bill 777](#), co-authored with Rep Rachael Cabral-Guevara (R - Appleton), could add approximately \$10 million for more participating local law enforcement agencies under the Law Enforcement Grant Program, distributed by the Wisconsin Department of Justice. Currently, just 10 municipalities across the state share about \$2 million in grant funding.

[Assembly Bill 831](#), co-authored with Rep. Donna Rozar (R-Marshfield), would require the Governor to dedicate \$1 million of ARPA funds to a “Pro-Cop Wisconsin” marketing campaign to recruit new officers within Wisconsin and attract officers from communities outside the state that have sought to defund their police.

[Assembly Bill 832](#), co-authored with Rep. Calvin Callahan (R-Tomahawk), would use ARPA funds to reimburse the cost of police academy recruits. It would also use those funds to double reimbursement expenses to local governments for

recertification costs, from \$160 per officer to \$320. While recertification costs vary by department, expenses can exceed \$600 per officer.

[Assembly Bill 836](#), co-authored with Rep. Jesse James (R-Altoona), would allocate \$1 million in ARPA funds to the Technical College System Board to establish at least two part-time law enforcement academy programs across the state. These funds will be used to recruit and hire additional instructors and cover other costs associated with establishing a new part time academy program.

The measures now move to the State Senate and must be signed by the Governor to become law.