

# Van Mobley: Step one in addressing Wisconsin's burgeoning lawlessness

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Traffic enforcement on our state and federal highways has been reduced as a priority over the last few years and it is time to make it a priority once again. For example, if one travels through Milwaukee County, where the Milwaukee County Sheriff is tasked with the role of enforcing the speed limits on the Interstate Highway System, one quickly notices traffic moves much faster than the posted maximum. Just drifting along with the flow generates feelings of wanton lawlessness which, once unleashed, can't help but spill over into adjacent neighborhoods.

Such lawless impulses must be crushed. To that end the next Governor and Legislature should make a long-term commitment to increase Wisconsin State Trooper strength from the 500 or so Troopers of today to around 750 Troopers. Paying for the new Troopers will cost Wisconsin around \$30-\$50 million extra a year. The added Troopers should be deployed to enforce with renewed vigor speed limits throughout the state – with special attention given to the Interstates connecting Chicago to Milwaukee and Milwaukee to Madison as well as the Interstate system within Milwaukee County itself.

Since there will in future be more State Troopers, Milwaukee County Sheriff Deputies can be relieved of the duty of patrolling the Interstates and other major thoroughfares in Milwaukee County. Existing funding streams to the Milwaukee Sheriff Department that support the Deputies on the Interstates should remain intact but the Deputies themselves should be redeployed into Milwaukee County neighborhoods with insufficient police resources or those Milwaukee County locales that might benefit from a surge in patrol activity. Special care must be taken that these law enforcement resources are not siphoned off into inappropriate areas no matter how pitiful the cries for resources in other areas are — or intriguing the ideas concerning other ways to spend the money. We need more not less cops—and we need them on the street.

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This new State Trooper strategy will directly address one aspect of our current culture of lawlessness (i.e. speeding, particularly on the Interstates). It will also free up Milwaukee County Sherriff Deputies to provide a denser police presence in Milwaukee County. Given the jurisdictional rivalries in Milwaukee County there might be some squawking among the locals about how and where to deploy the newly available Deputies as well as resultant police redeployments among other agencies. The public will evaluate how well local agencies and the elected officials to whom they report work it out. The State Troopers should of course play a role creating and evaluating the coherence and effectiveness of the new patrol dispositions as well.

A sustained surge of Wisconsin Troopers onto Wisconsin's Interstates in general, and Milwaukee County Interstates in particular, with a clear and unadulterated mandate to enforce the speed limits, will send a strong signal that the people intend to arrest Wisconsin's burgeoning culture of lawlessness. Who says the Cavalry can't come, even in this benighted age?

*- Mobley is president of Thiensville.*