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January 22, 2019 Remarks Announcing the Safer Streets Initiative

Thank you for gathering today. I want to thank U.S. Attorney Jeff Jensen and his team for joining me today to address an important issue within this community.

As many of us know, crime—especially violent crime—has continued to hold our city and our state back. Too often, this region’s image is defined by homicides, robberies, and carjackings.

Mothers are sitting at home, waiting and worrying that their loved ones will never return. Grandfathers are having their cars violently stolen on their very own neighborhood streets.

In the City of St. Louis, there were over 180 homicides in 2018. The Metropolitan Police Department reported over 375 carjackings, more than one a day.

These are not just alarming statistics. Instead each of these crimes represents a person’s life that has been senselessly taken or violently interrupted. Each murder represents a victim with potential unfulfilled. Every carjacking leaves a victim living in fear. Each of these represents a community torn apart.

Less than a month ago, I was sworn in as the Attorney General for the State of Missouri. As the state’s chief law enforcement officer, I cannot stand idly by as communities and lives are torn apart by violence and people feel unsafe.

In my first address as the Attorney General, I committed this office to protecting my fellow citizens. I intend to do just that.

We are here to be part of the solution to violent crime in St. Louis. I am proud to announce that the Missouri Attorney General's Office and the United States Attorney's Office will be partnering to reduce violent crime within the St. Louis area.

In this unprecedented partnership, Assistant Attorneys General on my team will be specially designated to ensure the Attorney General's Office can more fully prosecute violent crimes. These special prosecutors will handle all types of cases, specifically homicides, carjackings, and gun crimes. They will work hand in hand with our federal partners to effectively prosecute violent crimes.

These experienced prosecutors—under the direction of Cris Stevens and Christine Krug in our office and in partnership with U.S. Attorney Jensen and his excellent team—will focus on areas in the city where crime is most rampant. Last week, I met with St. Louis Chief of Police John Hayden, and I pledged that our team will work collaboratively to address this epidemic.

Therefore, our partnership will focus on specific areas within the city, at first. Our prosecutors will focus on crimes committed in the most dangerous areas, including in Chief Hayden's rectangle. This rough rectangle—bordered by Dr. Martin Luther King Drive, Goodfellow Boulevard, West Florissant Avenue and Vandeventer Avenue—is where much of the violent crime is occurring.

Today I am committing the state's resources to a problem that matters greatly to this city and our state. Local and federal law enforcement have taken great strides, and I believe by working together we can create safer streets.

With an unprecedented level of cooperation between state and federal prosecutors, I believe we together can continue to make great progress in making this region safer and more secure. I believe we can stand together against those who would bring violence to our streets, and can replace the violence with functioning, prosperous neighborhoods. I believe we can make a difference in peoples' lives.

It is my job as Attorney General and my number one duty to keep Missouri families safe. My family has lived in this region for generations. I want other families living in this region to feel that their children can grow up safely and pursue their dreams. The fight against violent crime is a fight worth fighting.

The mission statement in our office is simple: We are here “to protect Missourians...and to serve as the lawyers for the People, fighting for justice, especially for those who have no voice.”

We are here today to take an important step in carrying out that mission.