

Where He Stands:

Crime & Law Enforcement



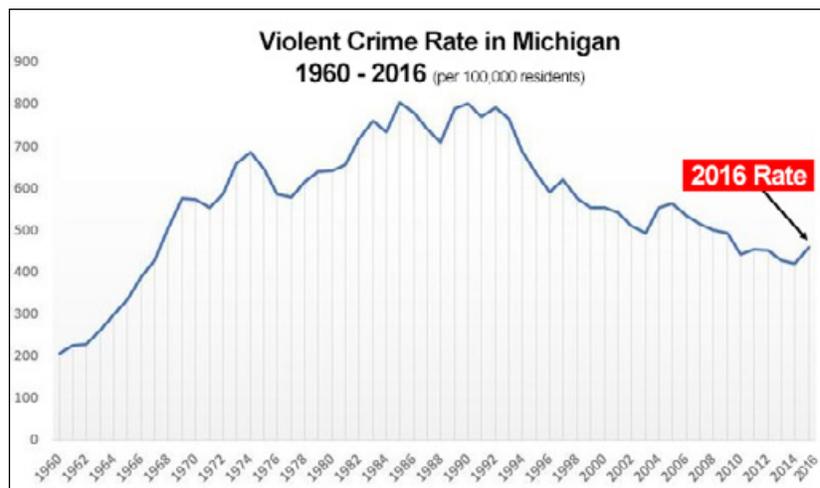
Every criminal act is an assault on civilized society. I am a strong supporter of our criminal justice system, and I always will be. While crime rates fluctuate from year to year, I am pleased to report that overall violent crime in our state declined 47.6% from 1991 to 2015. (See chart below.) According to a September 2017 report by *mLive*:

“You think crime rates are higher than ever? Think again. It’s true that Michigan’s violent crime rate went up 9% from 2015 to 2016, according to FBI statistics released Monday. But the state’s 2015 crime rate was the lowest since 1968, and the 2016 rate remains far below historic highs...”

“The state’s property crime rate dropped slightly from 2015 to 2016. Even better: The number of burglaries was the lowest since the FBI started collecting statistics in 1960, and the number of larceny thefts was the lowest since 1961.”

Every day, our law enforcement officials work hard in hazardous conditions to apprehend the criminals blighting our communities. They deserve our thanks and continued support, as do the prosecutors who hold criminals responsible for their acts. And don’t forget the brave corrections officers who staff our jails and prisons 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

While the long-term drop in crime rates is gratifying, we cannot rest on our laurels. I strongly believe that we can continue to reduce crime by learning from each other. “Best practices” and data-driven models that have worked well in one community should be shared with other cities, towns and villages. That’s where groups like the Michigan Association of Police Chiefs and the Michigan Association of Police Organizations play a vital role. Through their ongoing work, every level of law enforcement benefits, from the smallest village to the largest metro area.



You have a role to play in all of this. One of the best ways to support your local law enforcement team is by getting to know them personally. Invite a representative from your local police or sheriff’s department to speak at your neighborhood event, church or community center. Ask them for specific steps you can take to reduce crime in your area, then share that information with others.

Tackling the opioid and methamphetamine trade is also essential if we hope to bring crime rates even lower. I invite you to read my detailed position paper on the opioid crisis at www.BizonforMichiganSenate.com/keyissues.html.

As with all things in state government, good budgeting is critical. Providing adequate funding for law enforcement is a growing challenge, especially in this era of rapidly rising pension obligations. For example:

“The cost of providing retirement benefits for Michigan State Police employees nearly matched their gross pay last year, with most of the money going toward paying down debts incurred by decades of pension underfunding,” wrote

CapCon reporter Evan Carter in June 2017.

Clearly, this problem has been building for a long time. I support efforts to bring all affected parties together in order to find innovative new solutions to this looming budget problem – not just legislators, but also police chiefs, police union officials, fiscal experts, actuarial scientists and local officials. We cannot sidestep this problem, which threatens the solvency of the very pension programs that our local police officers depend on.

Your input matters to me. To use the comments box on our website, go to www.BizonforMichiganSenate.com. Or visit our Facebook page at [#bizonformichigansenate](https://www.facebook.com/bizonformichigansenate).