

REFERENCE TITLE: **violent crime; evidence-based strategies**

State of Arizona
Senate
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2023

SCR 1001

Introduced by
Senator Kavanagh

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE EFFECTIVE LAW
ENFORCEMENT AND REDUCE VIOLENT CRIME.

(TEXT OF BILL BEGINS ON NEXT PAGE)

1 Whereas, the United States is in the midst of a troubling crime
2 wave. 2019 to 2020 saw the single largest year-to-year increase in
3 murders in our nation's history, a trend that continued into 2021. Many
4 jurisdictions, such as Chicago, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and
5 Philadelphia, have seen carjackings double, triple or even quadruple in
6 just a couple of years. Nonfatal shootings and other aggravated assaults
7 have also dramatically increased in many jurisdictions; and

8 Whereas, crime, particularly violent crime, has lasting negative
9 impacts on victims and their families, community safety and economic
10 progress that more heavily affect lower socioeconomic neighborhoods; and

11 Whereas, clearance rates for violent crime have continued to drop in
12 the United States. It is estimated that just 41.2% of reported violent
13 crimes were "cleared" by an arrest in 2021; and

14 Whereas, crime, particularly violent crime, is largely concentrated
15 in small areas of a jurisdiction and carried out by a small proportion of
16 the population. For example, a study examining gun violence in Boston
17 from 1980 to 2008 found that more than half of gun violence incidents
18 occurred in areas making up less than 3% of the city. A 2021 study
19 estimated that 500 identifiable people in Washington, D.C., are
20 responsible for 60 to 70% of all gun violence in the city; and

21 Whereas, because violent crime is so concentrated in terms of
22 location and social networks, cities and towns should focus resources and
23 services on specific individuals and areas to reduce violent crime; and

24 Whereas, there are proven solutions to curbing violent crime that
25 can increase public safety and improve relationships between law
26 enforcement and their communities while limiting unnecessary interactions
27 between police and the public; and

28 Whereas, policing strategies such as "focused deterrence" have been
29 shown to dramatically decrease violent crime when properly implemented.
30 Focused deterrence requires collaboration between law enforcement and
31 community leaders and programs to identify individuals at high risk of
32 being involved in violent crime, provide those who cease their criminal
33 activity with services and support and crack down on those who continue to
34 engage in criminal behavior; and

35 Whereas, Boston implemented a focused deterrence program called
36 "Operation Ceasefire" in the mid-1990s to reduce homicides and firearm
37 violence among youth. As a result of the program, the city saw monthly
38 youth homicides drop by 63%, monthly citywide "shots-fired" calls to 911
39 drop by 25% and monthly gun incidents in target districts drop by 25% –
40 reductions that were significantly larger than those experienced by other
41 cities during the same period. Sustained investment in these strategies
42 has allowed Boston to avoid surges in violent crime during this most
43 recent crime wave. In 2021, Boston had 40 homicides while Baltimore, a
44 city with 100,000 fewer people, had 337 homicides; and

1 Whereas, in 2021, Dallas implemented a focused deterrence strategy
2 similar to Boston's. That same year, the homicide rate in Dallas
3 decreased by 13% from 2020. Arrests went down 11% as well, demonstrating
4 that focusing on the highest-risk individuals, rather than casting a wide
5 net, is a more effective strategy for reducing crime; and

6 Whereas, reducing blight in cities is another effective method to
7 reduce and contain violent crime. Strategies that have proven successful
8 include increasing street lighting, "cleaning and greening" vacant and
9 dilapidated lots, enforcing reasonable parking restrictions and properly
10 enforcing apartment codes in high-crime areas; and

11 Whereas, calls to defund the police are both counterproductive and
12 misguided, with study after study showing that having more officers,
13 particularly when focused in high-crime areas, decreases crime.
14 Additionally, better trained and educated officers are less likely to use
15 force and more likely to implement effective policing practices. Reducing
16 the investment in better quality police officers and policing strategies
17 will only negatively impact public safety at a time when police
18 departments are already experiencing record-high vacancies; and

19 Whereas, police budgets across the country rely significantly on
20 fines, fees and forfeitures – a practice that warps the core functions of
21 police, causes tension between officers and the communities they serve and
22 negatively impacts public safety. Studies show that police departments
23 that collect higher shares of revenue from fines and fees solve crimes at
24 lower rates; and

25 Whereas, police spend only a small fraction of time focusing on
26 violent crime while most of their time is dedicated to noncriminal calls
27 and traffic-related incidents; and

28 Whereas, law enforcement is generally not provided with alternative
29 solutions for handling those individuals suffering from mental health or
30 substance abuse issues. In contrast, co-responder models team law
31 enforcement with substance abuse and mental health experts, allowing
32 police to focus more time on violent crime while community organizations
33 help those in need of more specialized assistance; and

34 Whereas, many jurisdictions have categorically refused to prosecute
35 certain "quality of life" offenses, such as shoplifting. While lengthy
36 incarceration is not the appropriate remedy in most of these cases,
37 ignoring large categories of crime undermines the rule of law, eliminates
38 opportunities to address the root causes of criminal behavior and hinders
39 economic mobility for neighborhoods and their residents; and

40 Whereas, focusing resources on increasing incarceration as a
41 crime-reducing strategy is less effective than focused deterrence,
42 reducing blight or implementing co-responder models. While high-risk
43 offenders certainly need to be held accountable and incapacitated for the
44 sake of public safety, evidence shows that treatment, alternatives to

1 incarceration and other evidence-based programs can lower prison and jail
2 populations while also effectively reducing crime.

3 Therefore

4 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona,
5 the Senate concurring:

6 1. That the Members of the Legislature support strategies such as
7 focused deterrence and blight reduction to effectively prevent and reduce
8 violent crime.

9 2. That the Members of the Legislature oppose calls to defund the
10 police and instead support appropriating resources to fill current officer
11 vacancies, incentivizing quality recruits to join law enforcement,
12 encouraging high-quality officers to remain on the force and investing in
13 strategies and training shown to reduce crime and improve the quality of
14 policing.

15 3. That the Members of the Legislature oppose forcing law
16 enforcement agencies to fund significant percentages of their budgets
17 through fines, fees and forfeitures and instead support funding them
18 through a consistent and transparent budgetary process.

19 4. That the Members of the Legislature support providing law
20 enforcement with more tools to manage individuals who are dealing with
21 mental health and substance abuse issues in order to more effectively
22 treat underlying reasons for criminal behavior.

23 5. That the Members of the Legislature support implementing
24 evidence-based reforms that reduce prison populations, decrease
25 recidivism, focus policework on high-risk offenders and expand
26 rehabilitative programming.