

11/25/19 Missouri governor, mayors push for state law similar to recent Kansas City gun ordinances

Gov. Mike Parson and the mayors of Missouri's largest cities have agreed to tackle crime by pushing for a state law to keep handguns away from minors, domestic abusers and violent criminals.

The measure would reflect current federal law, but allow county prosecutors to crack down on offenders or place them in diversion programs.

Following a closed-door meeting Monday, Parson and the mayors of Kansas City, St. Louis, Springfield and Columbia announced that they had narrowed their focus on fighting violence in their communities to three objectives. The proposed state law was paired with a request from mayors and police chiefs for more funding for witness protection and relocation, as well as community mental health.

Parson has already met twice with the mayors, and the mayors themselves have met four times in locations around the state. He said will make his case for a new state law to lawmakers, who are scheduled to start filing bills next week for the January legislative session.

He called the solutions "common sense" and said he was "optimistic" for their passage. "If you are going to be involved with domestic violence and you start involving weapons in it, that needs to be addressed," Parson said. "I think that that's a reasonable ask, of what the mayors are asking to do."

Parson emphasized that the discussions so far were about short-term solutions. Longer-term, reduction of poverty remains a priority.

"It's still going to come back to education," Parson said. "It's going to come back to work. It's going to come back to workforce development and how do we get people hope in this state to get out of those situations..."

Kansas City has already passed ordinances that restrict handguns from minors and domestic abusers. Under the new measures, minors who possess handguns can be redirected to juvenile services, instead of landing in federal prison. Domestic abusers, upon conviction of a related misdemeanor or felony, are barred from carrying a concealed weapon.

Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas said he hoped for the city's initiative to spread statewide. "We are being responsible," Lucas told reporters, speaking about all three objectives. "This isn't radical reform. These aren't radical ideas."

Kansas City has seen a rash of violence, and the homicide rate this year is outpacing last year's.

It's one of the reasons Lucas, a Democrat, said he believed it to be important to work with Parson, a Republican. "Nobody wants me to sit around and be a proud Democrat, and four years from now, we still have 140 homicides in Kansas City," Lucas said. "I'll meet with the governor every day of the week if we can get this problem solved and I'm proud of the fact that I think he will as well."