

# Laws without consequences fuel chaos



## Your Turn

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Guest columnist

I took an oath to serve the citizens and visitors of Monroe County, and I will not abandon it. I will not stand silent while people with no regard for humanity destroy our communities.

The sweeping reforms to our criminal justice system that began in 2018 are proving unsustainable. I hear many crime victims' stories – they keep me awake at night. Whether they lost a loved one to violence or their car was stolen, and now they can't get to work, crimes generate victims who didn't ask to be involved.

Sadly, I'm running out of tools to help them.

My deputies are good at catching criminals. But I struggle when I ask them to continue pursuing the same perpetrators time and time again. My deputies continue to make arrests while violent

repeat offenders successfully navigate the revolving door of our justice system, released with no intervention, to address the underlying causes of their criminality. These individuals, most with no regard for anyone but themselves, are empowered by a legal process that places more value on criminals than on victims.

Our laws lack accountability to make re-offending and high-risk behaviors unattractive. Laws without consequences facilitate the chaos we are experiencing. Violent individuals and repeat offenders will continue to threaten our lives and property if we allow them the means to do so.

Many well-intended objectives targeted by criminal justice reform are valid and long overdue. However, much of the reform cast crime victims aside and left community stakeholders out of policy discussions.

We need to work together to achieve objectives that protect everyone – especially victims.

To that end, last October, with the help of the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce, a diverse group of

stakeholders – crime victims, clergy, businesspeople, community organizers, law enforcement, government leaders, medical and legal professionals, and private citizens, gathered with one mission – to advocate for improvements to public safety.

That group, the Consortium for Safe Communities (CSC), has continued to meet, and is asking leaders in Albany to mitigate unintended negative consequences of criminal justice reforms and reject proposed “elder parole” legislation and its potentially destructive impact on victims.

Like any plan enacted, laws are often imperfect and need to be adjusted after impacts are evaluated. We must be honest about the reforms' effects on victims of crime and the communities in which we live.

I intend to live up to my oath every day. I invite our state legislators to do the same by putting crime victims first and making adjustments to the laws that impact the safety of our communities.

*Todd Baxter is Monroe County sheriff.*