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DA Taylor's Statement On The Topeka City Council's Decriminalization Of Domestic Battery

"I am deeply saddened by the City of Topeka's unfortunate decision to place resources and political grandstanding before its constituents' safety. I am also deeply encouraged by the strong, angry response of the people of Topeka and Shawnee County. The citizens of Topeka and Shawnee County have spoken and spoken clearly – public safety must be our government's first priority. Public safety is the core responsibility of government and a responsibility I am deeply committed to upholding.

Therefore, effective immediately my office will commence the review and filing of misdemeanors decriminalized by the City of Topeka. My office now retains sole authority to prosecute domestic battery misdemeanors and will take on this responsibility so as to better protect and serve our community. We will do so with less staff, less resources, and severe constraints on our ability to effectively seek justice. But we will do so willingly to preserve the public safety of all the citizens of Shawnee County.

Over the past three years, my office has consistently demonstrated through actions our commitment to public safety. When I assumed office as the Shawnee County District Attorney I inherited a backlog of over 4,000 unfiled, unreviewed cases. Within a year this backlog had been reviewed and over 500 new cases were filed. Additionally, our office has seen a massive increase in the number of criminal cases we file. Since taking office we have seen an over 25% increase in adult criminal case filings, holding more people accountable for their actions and removing dangerous criminals off our community's streets. Perhaps most notably, our office has worked diligently to combat domestic battery. Over the past three years, the Shawnee County District Attorney's Office has increased misdemeanor domestic battery filings by over 80% and convictions by over 50%. All these changes were accomplished without any additional county budget funds and with a reduction in staff.

This progress is now threatened by the Shawnee County Commission and Topeka City Council's actions. Public safety is being ignored by the leaders of this community and we will shortly see the consequences of their actions. A drastic reduction in staffing levels will impact the timely filing of criminal cases. It will impact what cases are filed. And it will impact the services provided to the public. In short, these decisions to put politics above public safety will make our community a less safe, less secure place to live.

This negative impact on public safety is unacceptable. I will continue to work with the City Council, the County Commission, affected agencies, and the public to craft a more productive, more efficient, and ultimately more just solution to prosecuting crime and keeping our community safe."

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