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Senator Jay Morris Announces the A Safer Louisiana Agenda

April 1, 2022 -- Rising violent crime is threatening the safety of Louisiana's citizens and is impairing the economic vitality of the State according to Senator Jay Morris (R West Monroe) who has introduced a number of bills dealing with criminal law in the Regular Legislative Session of 2022. "Crime is spiking all across Louisiana and the legislature needs to step up and address this situation before it gets worse. These bills, along with those introduced by other legislators are just the beginning of what will likely be a multi year effort to reverse the trend of letting violent people back on the streets" said Senator Morris. "From massive numbers of car jackings and other violent crimes in New Orleans and other cities to potshots taken at police officers by young criminals here in northeastern Louisiana, the problem is widespread" he added.

Morris blames a large part of the problem on light prison sentences, particularly for repeat offenders. "The recidivism rate is outrageous" according to Senator Morris who went on to point out "We have the same people committing these crimes over and over and they are getting younger and younger. It just has to stop. I've spoken with law enforcement officials including sheriffs, police officials and district attorneys and nearly all agree that we have a serious problem with crime in this state." Morris indicated the problem is not unique to Louisiana and points to a study by the U.S. Sentencing Commission that supports his position that light sentences for violent crimes have deleterious effect on recidivism rates. One of the conclusions of the study was **"Released prisoners who served less time had higher arrest rates than those who served more."** Click [here](#) for a link to the study.

Judges are often giving light sentences to violent and/or repeat offenders and in some

instances prosecutors are simply not charging offenders within required time frames...or at all...putting these dangerous people back on the streets quickly. In other cases Judges' hands are tied by existing law relating to sentencing or the system just lets offenders out early. Even criminals who are already convicted of serious violent offenses are being let out on bail pending appeals or sentencing. "The balance has tipped in favor of the violent criminal and away from the victims and safety of the public" according to Morris. Because the problem is multifaceted Morris introduced multiple bills relating to several criminal justice issues.

- **SB 142** - This bill prohibits a court from waiving the minimum mandatory sentence for all crimes of violence as opposed to a select group of crimes and requires that for a second or subsequent felony offense, when the defendant has a prior crime of violence or the current conviction is a crime of violence, the offender will serve an additional five years if there has been less than seven years from the conviction of the prior felony offense.
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- **SB 4** - This bill would authorize a constitutional amendment to eliminate the authority of a court to grant bail after an offender has been convicted thereby allowing the legislature to pass laws relating to post conviction bail.
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- **SB 89** - This bill prohibits the release of a criminal after conviction for a serious violence offense absent good cause shown.
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- **SB 263** - This bill would authorize a constitutional amendment to allow the Attorney General to prosecute cases without the permission of the court in which the cases are brought under conditions set forth by the legislature. The constitution currently requires that the local court approve the Attorney General's involvement in a case.
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- **SB 387** - Allows the Attorney General to initiate the prosecution of a crime when a district attorney cannot or refuses to initiate a prosecution.

Senator Morris acknowledged that there will a tough slog to get this agenda through the legislature. "Approximately 5 years ago 'criminal justice fever' was rampant at the Capitol and I felt like a lone voice warning about some of the purported reform bills. I believe the legislature went too far and oversold such reform efforts and now the public is suffering because of that and other issues relating to criminal justice. We need to do whatever we can to reclaim safety of the public as one of our priorities. Without a safe place to live and work many of our other efforts, economic and otherwise, will be for naught," Morris concluded.

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