

Sheriff, state's attorney warn against petition that could lead to reckless public safety cuts

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EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County Sheriff John Lakin and State's Attorney Tom Gibbons are warning “dire consequences” if a local petition drive limiting the county's maximum tax rate is put on ballot this November.

Lakin and Gibbons briefed local law enforcement Wednesday morning about the local petition drive to put the tax rate on the ballot.

Lakin and Gibbons stressed that if this effort is successful, dangerous criminals will be released into the community.

“Together your sheriff, state’s attorney, local police chiefs and local residents are calling on citizens to protect law enforcement and protect our community and don’t sign the petition,” it was said in a statement by Lakin and Gibbons.

A local group is circulating petitions to put a measure limiting Madison County’s maximum tax rate on the ballot this November. Lakin and Gibbons warned that the proposed artificial cap would drastically reduce the General Operating Fund, which funds the County’s public safety and criminal justice programs.

Current estimates indicate that the Sheriff’s Office and Jail would be cut by over \$600,000, and the cuts to the State’s Attorney’s Office would top \$200,000.

“The reckless cuts caused by this effort will take cops off the streets, let criminals out of jail, eliminate tracking of dangerous felons, and prevent prosecutors from holding criminals accountable in court,” said Gibbons.

Lakin and Gibbons said dysfunction at the state and federal level has already harmed funding for local law enforcement.

Lakin and Gibbons both said they continue to support true property tax reform and budget savings that eliminate abuse, waste and fraud. However, they say this local initiative is not true property tax reform and deceives citizens of its true consequences. The two said this proposal is similar to the Governor Rauner’s call to release 20 percent of the inmates from all Illinois prisons, in the same way this local proposal would put dangerous criminals back on the streets.

“We cannot stand silently by and allow citizens to be misled into signing a petition that puts their families, neighborhoods and communities at risk,” Lakin said. “If this plan is implemented, the county's ability to patrol neighborhoods, investigate crimes, safely staff the jail, prosecute felons, and monitor people on probation would be threatened.”

Based on the figures provided, the two said the proposed reduction would force layoffs in General Fund Departments, which would include public safety positions such as sheriff deputies, jailers, probation officers, and prosecutors. Gibbons said the proposed tax rate cut would reduce the property tax bill on a \$100,000 home by \$6 per year, not the hundreds or thousands of dollars falsely claimed by the group pushing this reckless proposal.

“A safe community is our number one goal – and it is one of the top reasons people choose to call Madison County home,” Gibbons said. “At a time when citizens are calling for tougher law enforcement, this proposal does the exact opposite. My office filed almost 300 more felony charges in 2015 than in 2014.

“Additionally, we are facing an increase in violent crimes in some areas of our county, while also facing an epidemic of drug addiction and the thousands of crimes that go along with it. I believe most of our residents would agree that it is worth \$6 a year to keep those criminals off the street and keep our community safe.”

Gibbons and Lakin said the numbers promoted by this group have been reviewed and they do not add up.

"Citizens are being misled on the amount of money this will save them and the true consequences if passed," they said.

Lakin and Gibbons are asking the citizens of Madison County to do their homework before being deceived into signing away their right to have a safe community.