

Haine Releases 2023 Annual Report, Highlights Record Pace Of Prosecution Despite SAFE-T Act's Impact

by Submitted by Madison County State's Attorney's Office
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Madison County State's Attorney's Office provided some additional details today of how it has continued a record pace of prosecution even after the SAFE-T Act has been in place.

These are additional highlights of the report.

Highlight 2: Managing the SAFE-T Act - The SAFE-T Act, which Haine opposed, was originally set to go into effect Jan. 1, 2023. But, after a lawsuit was filed by Haine, Sheriff Jeff Connor and dozens of other county officials throughout the state, a major amendment was passed in mid-December alleviating some of the more egregious problems with the original bill. This lawsuit also caused a pause in the effective date of the new law, which eventually went into effect on Sept. 18, 2023.

“These last-minute changes to the law, and the additional months to prepare, have been essential in alleviating the worst-case scenarios with this new law,” said Haine.

The SAFE-T Act eliminated cash bail and allows for a defendant to be held in custody before trial only if he or she is charged with certain high-level offenses. But even if the defendant is charged with one of those eligible offenses, the State’s Attorney’s Office is required to persuade a judge that the defendant meets additional criteria, such as being a “real and present threat” to others. Judges make these determinations at a new type of hearing called a Detention Hearing, where the State’s Attorney’s Office is required to present a case for why the defendant should remain in pretrial custody.

“The SAFE-T Act remains a major challenge, and it has taken a major effort to ensure that we continue keeping our communities safe while working within the constraints of this new law,” Haine said.

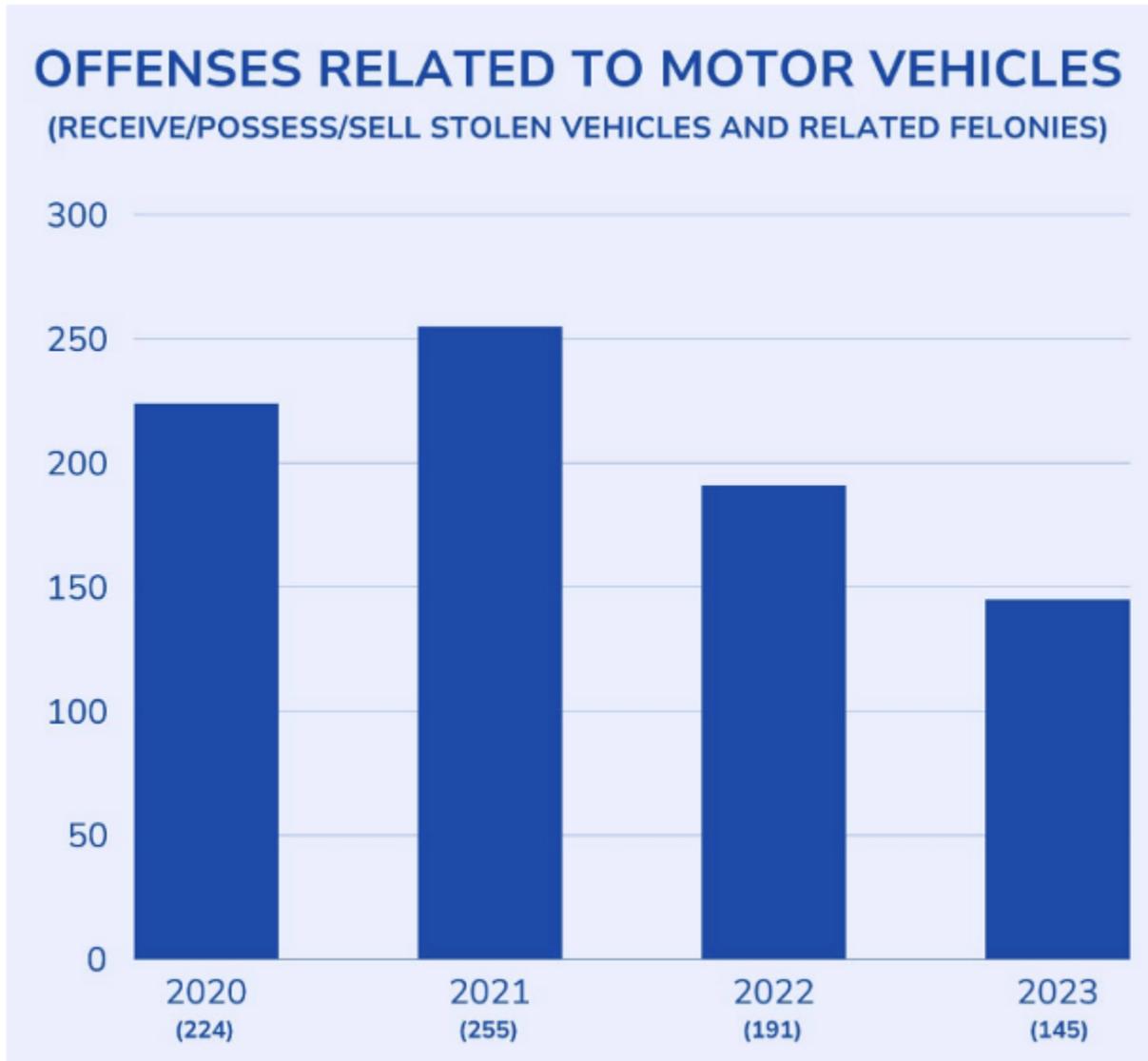
“Prosecutors from the State’s Attorney’s Office held multiple strategy meetings and training sessions with Law Enforcement agencies to find ways to minimize the harmful impact of the SAFE-T Act. I’m immensely grateful for their work, along with the cooperation we’ve received from the Courts, Probation Department, Circuit Clerk’s Office and other stakeholders.”

The Annual Report notes that the State’s Attorney’s Office launched a Warrant Division in 2023, in part to meet new requirements of the SAFE-T Act. The Warrant Division, staffed primarily by two Assistant State’s Attorneys as well as support personnel, evaluate investigations presented by Law Enforcement agencies and determines what, if any, charges should be issued. In addition, the Warrant Division prepares Detention Petitions and presents arguments in support of those petitions during Detention Hearings.

Highlight 3: Continued efforts against Cross-River Crime and vehicle thefts. The report notes the continued impact of the Cross-River Crime Task Force.

The State’s Attorney’s Office continues to see a reduction in the number of vehicle-theft charges filed. The Task Force was formed in 2021 amid growing concern of criminal activity – including vehicle thefts – flowing into Madison County.

Following a record high in 2021, the number of vehicle theft cases presented to the State's Attorney's Office has sharply declined. In 2021, the SAO charged 255 individuals with Offenses Related To Motor Vehicles (a category that includes possessing, receiving or selling a stolen vehicle). That total dropped to 191 in 2022, then dropped further to 145 in 2023.



Other highlights from the Annual Report include:

- Data showing aggressive prosecution of those who attempt to flee from or harm Law Enforcement officers.
- Implementation of a new case management software system that has Prosecutor By Karpel, for felony cases. This system has the ability to streamline workflows, cut costs, and increase the capabilities and speed of prosecutors. As the volume of digital data associated with the prosecution of a criminal case continues to grow

(for example, body-camera video mandated by the SAFE-T Act), this new system will improve the office's efficiency.

- Launch of redesigned website, www.madcoSAO.gov.
- List of the top felony charges filed in 2023, led by Possession of Methamphetamine (476 filed) and Possession of Controlled Substance (363).

