

HB 495 -- PUBLIC SAFETY

SPONSOR: Christ

Beginning August 28, 2025, the Board of Police Commissioners will assume control of the municipal police department of St. Louis and, no later than September 28, 2025, four citizen commissioners will be appointed to the Board, as provided in the bill, to serve with the mayor as the governing body of the police force. The Board will have the power to appoint the chief of police, determine appeals from the decisions of the chief of police, and to promulgate rules for the department.

Additionally, until the Board adopts other investigative and disciplinary procedures, the police force will follow the disciplinary and investigative procedures established by the Police Manual of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department that are consistent with law.

This bill provides that the city of St. Louis may pass ordinances, including ordinances for preserving order and protecting the public, but no ordinance, charter provision, or initiative petition can conflict or interfere with the powers or the exercise of the powers of the Board of Police Commissioners. Additionally, the mayor or any city officer must not impede or hinder the Board of Police Commissioners. The mayor or any city officer will be liable for a penalty of \$1,000 for each offense to hinder the Board and will forever be disqualified from holding or exercising any office of the city.

The salaries paid as of August 28, 2025, will not be less than the annual salaries paid to each member before the enactment of this bill. No additional compensation will be given to any officer of the rank of lieutenant or above for overtime, court time, or stand-by court time. The bill specifies provisions related to compensation and other employment benefits for all positions on the police force.

This bill provides that reimbursements from the Legal Expense Fund to the Board for liability claims will be on an equal share basis per claim up to a maximum of \$1 million per fiscal year.

This bill repeals provisions relating to the municipal police force established by the city of St. Louis and other provisions relating to procedures of the Board.

The bill prohibits stunt driving, as defined in the bill, on the roads and highways of this state. A violation of this provision is a class B misdemeanor unless an accident is involved, in which case

it is a class A misdemeanor. The bill also prohibits stunt driving in connection with a street takeover or performing or participating in a street takeover, as defined in the bill. A violation of this provision is a class A misdemeanor for a first offense, a class E felony for a second offense, and a class D felony for a third or subsequent offense. The bill also prohibits a suspended imposition of sentence or a fine in lieu of imprisonment for a defendant who is proven to be a prior, persistent, aggravated, chronic, or habitual offender. The bill also specifies minimum prison terms for such a defendant. The bill provides exceptions for events sanctioned by a political subdivision or private entity with responsibility for maintenance and control of the portion of highway or private property on which the motor vehicle operation occurs.

The bill adds the offense of endangering the welfare of a child in the first degree to the definition of "dangerous felony" in the criminal code. The bill also amends the offense of endangering the welfare of a child to include when a person, in the presence of a child or in a residence where a child resides, unlawfully manufactures or attempts to manufacture, compounds, possesses, produces, prepares, sells, transports, tests, or analyzes fentanyl or carfentanil. The offense in such circumstances carries a sentence of five to 10 years of imprisonment and is not eligible for suspended execution of sentence, for a fine in lieu of imprisonment, or for conditional release or parole until the person serves at least five years of imprisonment.

Currently, the offense of rioting is committed when a person knowingly assembles and conspires with six or more individuals to violate the criminal laws of this state or of the United States, and the offense is a class A misdemeanor. This bill removes the requirement for a conspiracy and it involves a person assembling with six or more persons and thereafter violating any of the criminal laws of this state or the United States. It also increases the penalty to a class D felony for a first offense and a class C felony for a second or subsequent offense.

The bill specifies that any vehicle involved in the commission of the offense of resisting an arrest, detention, or stop when the offense is a class E felony will be impounded and forfeited.

This bill establishes the "Committee on School Safety" within the Department of Public Safety with membership as provided in the bill. The Committee will at least quarterly evaluate and establish guidelines for school safety concerns, including plans to prevent school firearm violence. The Committee must submit a report to the Governor, the President Pro Tem of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives after every meeting of the committee.

This bill is similar to SB 44 (2025).