

Dear Chairman Rubin:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit a written response in support of Senate Bill 16, RICO act:

My name is Sgt Andrew Beightel with the Topeka Police Department. I am currently the supervisor of the Topeka Police Departments recently formed "Violent Crimes Unit (VCU)". Prior to my appointment to my current position I was in the criminal interdiction unit for six years. During that time I had countless encounters with criminal gang members and violent offenders. I have participated and testified in all types of criminal prosecutions, ranging from multiple homicides, robberies and large scale drug trafficking to misdemeanor shoplifting.

The last few years I have witnessed a vast shift in how criminal street gangs operate. In the past there was a hard line of division between gang sets, colors and even physical territories.

The trend we are observing today is more geared towards monetary gain and status elevation within the criminal underworld, regardless of which gang the individual is claiming. We are also observing once rival gang members working together to accomplish certain criminal goals.

With the blurring of the gang sets and lines it has increased the abilities for criminal gang members to commit a larger spectrum of crimes and the ability to be unseen by law enforcement.

Topeka's Violent Crimes Unit (VCU) was formed in response to an increase in our cities crime, the majority of which is committed by criminal street gangs. The VCU's current focus is on violent career crimes, criminal street gangs, guns and street level narcotics sales. In building this new component to our agency we had an opportunity to collaborate and partner with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The Topeka Police Departments VCU is currently working federal RICO investigations on two of our city's more violent street gangs. Through our investigation of these two criminal street gangs I was very surprised to see that both groups had a rather intricate and complex hierarchy of power and control dictating the gang's direction.

The leaders of these criminal street gangs attempt to insulate themselves from criminal prosecution by ordering lower ranking members of the gang to carry out crimes by intimidation, monetary gain or promised elevation within the criminal organization. By passing a state RICO Act it would provide all Kansas law enforcement agencies the necessary tools to address these criminal street gangs as a criminal enterprises and an organization as a whole. State RICO would allow law enforcement to target the whole criminal organization including the leaders. Once the hierarchy of the gang is destroyed, the entire gang dissolves.

State RICO would also allow local law enforcement to respond to gang problems as soon as they arise instead of waiting for violent crime levels to rise to the level of federal intervention.

In addition, this proposed bill seeks bail be at least \$50,000 cash or surety for anyone arrested and charged under State RICO. This will help ensure that the defendant will not re-offend prior to their court date.

After implementing our partnership with the FBI and shifting our method of policing to a RICO investigations, I have seen a steady and steep decrease in Topeka's reported violent crimes. Violent crime is down nearly 40 % in the last 6 months.

I thank you for your time,

Respectfully,

Sgt. Andrew G. Beightel

Topeka Police Department

Violent Crimes Unit

