

**Prepared Opening Statement of Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing on Federal Support for Preventing and Responding to Carjackings
March 1, 2022**

Congress has an important role to play in combatting the rise in violent crimes like carjacking.

People often confuse carjacking with motor vehicle theft, but carjacking is much more dangerous. We're not talking about having a car stolen from a parking lot. We're talking about when someone uses violence or the threat of violence to take control of a car from someone else. For example, cars are being taken from parents at gunpoint while their child is still in the vehicle. A member of the Illinois legislature was in the car with her husband when masked men with guns ordered them out of their car. She begged them not to shoot her or her husband and their lives were only saved when her husband returned fire.

These carjackers form "booster crews" that have strategically figured out where to commit carjackings so they can overwhelm the local police, and which kinds of cars to target. Hijacked cars are then being used by gangs and criminal organizations. They use fake license plates to disguise the cars and then use them as getaway cars or to commit other crimes. Carjackings directly feed the nationwide surge in other crimes.

The increase in this violent crime of carjacking is part of a very disturbing trend nationwide. Murders rose by 30 percent in 2020 and early data suggests murders rose again by at least 10 percent in 2021. That's thousands of lives needlessly lost.

Attacks on law enforcement are up. Police officers recorded the highest number of on-duty deaths in 2021 since 1995, excluding the 9/11 attacks. Law enforcement groups nationwide are struggling to recruit high quality officers.

It's time to start looking for solutions to the different parts of this crime wave. Operation Legend was extremely successful by providing federal manpower to overwhelmed cities. Some, like Mayor Lightfoot in Chicago, have requested similar federal resources. Proactive policing and increasing the number of available law enforcement officers are part of the solutions.

Expanding the toolkit of federal prosecutors could also be an effective response. I'm looking at expanding the reach of the federal carjacking statute. Progressive prosecutors at the state level have told criminals that they won't get in trouble for certain crimes. Well, that won't fly with the federal government.

This hearing on carjackings is a good start, and I look forward to more hearings on violent crime issues such as violence against law enforcement and the homicide spike. I look forward to focusing as a body on the different areas of violent crime and how we in Congress can solve these problems.

It's also critical that we exercise our important oversight authority of the federal agencies involved in monitoring and reducing crime, like the Justice Department. Congress needs to know if what the DOJ is currently doing is making enough of an impact on crime and safety.

We also need oversight so that we can redirect misfocused energy and resources. Spending government resources on the so-called "Iron Pipeline," ghost guns, and lawful firearms dealers isn't going to help crime go down. These liberal priorities affect a tiny fraction of overall crimes. We should be pursuing policies that will actually make an impact on this massive crime surge.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.