



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 30, 2013

Milwaukee County Sheriff Advises Residents to Get Gun Training

Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke, Jr. recently gave area residents a reality check about local law enforcement's ability to protect them. In a [public service radio ad](#), the county's top cop advises that personal security "is no longer a spectator sport. I need you in the game. But are you ready?" With tightened budgets and lowered police manpower, "simply calling 9-1-1 is no longer your best option," Clarke says in a grim, no-nonsense voice. "You can beg for mercy from a violent criminal, hide under the bed — or you can fight back. But are you prepared?"



In Clarke's mind, being prepared means knowing how to use a firearm if the need arises. "Consider taking a certified safety course in handling a firearm so you can defend yourself until we get there," he advises. "You have a duty to protect yourself and your family," Clarke counsels county residents. "We're partners now. Can I count on you?"

The radio message, produce by the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office and played on local stations such as talk radio WISN, prompted predictable outrage from liberal politicians and mouthpieces in the Milwaukee area. Mayor Tom Barrett dutifully sounded off, accusing Clarke of trying to imitate a Clint Eastwood police character. "Apparently Sheriff David Clarke is auditioning for the next *Dirty Harry* movie," Barrett commented in his shoot-from-the-hip statement.

Clarke replied by telling [Fox News](#) that he had never seen a *Dirty Harry* movie, "but if that's all the mayor can come up with, that's pretty weak." He added that Barrett obviously "doesn't have much to offer, and that's okay. My job is to protect the public."

Clarke went on to explain that the Milwaukee area has suffered a rise in burglaries and robberies, and the ad was an attempt to help residents prepare for the possibility of being targeted by a violent criminal — with the police nowhere to be found. "I feel that personal safety is an individual responsibility," the sheriff told Fox, "but people have to be prepared.... The police are not omnipresent. We can't be everywhere all the time. Sometimes we can't be there as fast as we'd like. Once the wolf is at the door — once the intruder is in your home, once a guy sticks a gun in your face on the street and demands your wallet or wants to take your car — 9-1-1 isn't going to help you. But there are some things that you can do in that situation to protect yourself, and it's my obligation to advise people how to do that."

Fox noted that Mayor Barrett "was beaten up several years ago by someone with a tire iron, and Clarke said he thought that would make the mayor 'a lot more sensitive to people being able to defend themselves in such instances. A firearm and a plan of defense would have come in handy for him that day.'"

Another critic of Clarke's advice, Roy Felber of the Milwaukee Deputy Sheriffs' Association, appeared to twist Clarke's words into a call for vigilantism, saying that the sheriff's counsel "doesn't sound too



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smart. People have the right to defend themselves, but they don't have the right to take the law into their own hands."

Similarly, Jeri Bonavia of the Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort called the radio spot "an irresponsible thing for the chief public safety officer of a county to do. I think he owes this community an apology. And if he really believes that he's not capable of providing for our public safety he should get a different job."

The police department of the Milwaukee suburb of Greenfield waded into the fray, claiming on its Facebook page that violent crime "is down overall and in Greenfield...." Ignoring that criminal violence is often a split-second occurrence that requires a like response, the department chirped that "our response time to violent crime is less than 2 minutes," and lamely advised that the choice "to arm yourself with a firearm is a very personal and private decision that should not be driven by fear that our officers will not respond to your calls for help."

Greenfield police chief Brad Wentlandt offered that his department works "tirelessly to promote a feeling of safety and security for our residents," adding for good measure: "When bad things do happen, our response is swift and our investigative skills are top notch."

The [Los Angeles Times](#) noted that while Clarke has been sheriff of Milwaukee county since 2002, always running as a Democrat, he has toyed with the idea of a conservative leaning change. In the wake of the Newtown elementary school shootings, Clarke took to the Wisconsin-based [Tea Party Perspective](#) website to call liberals "shameful" for trying to use the tragedy as justification for ramped up gun control.

"We have to resist with the ferociousness of a junk yard dog any attempt by liberals to make us less free by chipping away at our constitutional freedoms," Sheriff Clarke wrote. "The second amendment is as sacred a right as is the first amendment or any other amendment."

He charged that liberals "don't care about curbing violence, because if they did they wouldn't coddle and call for more leniency for criminal perpetrators. When a hold-up man sticks a gun in someone's face and takes their money, liberals want to offer job training, they want the criminal to serve their sentence walking round in the community with a monitoring device on. How crazy is that?"

Clarke called the push for gun control nothing more than "the mindset of sheep. Once the wolf is at the door, you're helpless. Sure, run and hide from a sociopathic killer.... You know where that will get you? 26 dead at Sandy Hook School." He noted that in that tragedy, as in scores like it, "no one could stop the shooting, and the cops weren't there yet. The only reason there weren't more slaughtered is because the wolf took his own life before slaughtering more innocent sheep."

Photo of Sheriff David Clarke: AP Images



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