

# Florida state senator calls for National Guard to be deployed on the streets of Jacksonville in response to recent spate of violence

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Democratic State Senator Audrey Gibson and other Jacksonville area politicians have called for a variety of repressive measures, including city-wide curfews and the deployment of the National Guard in response to a spike in homicides in recent weeks.

There were 13 shootings in Jacksonville from Thursday of last week through Sunday. Six of those resulted in homicides.

Four people were shot and two killed, including a 14-year-old, in a single incident on Thursday evening when a fistfight between two women at a local park escalated into an exchange of gunfire among the spectators, according to the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO).

On Saturday, there were three homicides, including a 41-year-old woman who was allegedly murdered by a 46-year-old woman whom she "had history with," according to the JSO. The other victims were a 27-year-old man killed in a drive-by shooting and a 19-year-old man slain in an incident in front of an at-home barbershop, according to police. Another man was also wounded in that shooting.

On Sunday, a 42-year-old man was killed and his female companion critically injured in a shooting inside a home. Another man was shot three times on Sunday by armed carjackers but was expected to survive.

Since January 1st, there have been 26 murders in Jacksonville, the most of any city in Florida. There were 126 homicides in Jacksonville in 2018.

At a press conference held on Monday, State Senator Gibson and Representative Tracie Davis, both Democrats and in whose districts some of the shootings occurred, called for the militarization of the city in response to the violence, including instituting a

citywide curfew of 10 p.m. for all residents and bringing in the Florida Highway Patrol to help police the city.

Gibson also suggested that the National Guard be deployed in the city, an act that would require an order from Florida's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis.

"I don't have a problem calling out the National Guard. I am not interested so much in having armed guardsmen on every corner, but we need to have a bigger presence in this city—whatever that looks like. I know some people will want to be a little bit jittery about that, but we are not safe, bringing in the Guard is certainly an option," Gibson told reporters.

Davis also told the media she would advocate for more public surveillance cameras to be installed throughout the city and would ask city officials to expand upon the existing "shot-spotter" technology.

Davis and Gibson were joined at the press conference by Anna Lopez Brosche, a Republican city councilwoman who is running against Republican Mayor Lenny Curry in next month's mayoral elections. Brosche has campaigned heavily on the issue of crime in the city, blaming the incumbent mayor for failing to stop the surge in violence in recent years.

The call for the suspension of democratic rights in response to the recent killings is a demonstration of the political orientation of Gibson and Davis. Urging city officials to declare a "state of urgency emergency," the Democratic party operatives would have citizens believe that it is a lack of effective policing, rather than the vast levels of social inequality within the city, that is responsible for the city's high crime rate.

For decades, politicians in Florida have echoed the national trend of increasing funding for law

enforcement at the expense of vital social needs. At the same time, the living conditions of the working class in Jacksonville and throughout the state have stagnated or declined.

Jacksonville's official poverty rate of 17 percent, representing 142,385 people, exceeds the state average of 16.1 percent. For adolescents, the rate is higher still, with 22.4 percent aged 12 to 17 and 27.6 percent of children age six and younger under the poverty line.

Residents of Jacksonville are already subjected to oppressive levels of policing. Mass patrols, arbitrary traffic stops, and stop-and-frisk tactics are features of everyday life in the city's poorest neighborhoods.

An article published in 2017 by the *Florida Times-Union* and *ProPublica* headlined "Walking While Black" exposed the JSO's use of pedestrian tickets—citations issued for jaywalking and similar "crimes"—as a pretext to harass and intimidate the city's poor and minority populations.

Citing statistics drawn from the previous five years, the article found that pedestrian citations "were disproportionately issued to blacks, almost all of them in the city's poorest neighborhoods. In the last five years, blacks received 55 percent of all pedestrian tickets in Jacksonville, while only accounting for 29 percent of the population. Residents of the city's three poorest zip codes were about six times as likely to receive a pedestrian citation as those living in the city's other, more affluent 34 zip codes".

The report also found that many of the citations were issued illegally, including six tickets written for not carrying an ID while walking, which is not a crime. It stated that of the 658 tickets issued by Jacksonville police from 2012 to 2017 for crossing the street while not in a crosswalk, 353 were issued "in error." Undersheriff Bob Ivey all but admitted that the citations were issued as an excuse to harass and search poor residents, telling *ProPublica*, "Shame on him, that gives me a legal reason to stop him."

More recently, in a blatantly anti-democratic operation, JSO officers charged nine men with felonies for brandishing guns in rap videos posted online. All nine men were charged with being felons in possession of a firearm, even though none were in possession of guns at the time of their arrest and it is impossible to prove whether the guns featured in the various videos were real or not.

It is notable that the call by Jacksonville Democrats to declare a state of "urgency emergency" comes only a week after President Trump declared his own state of emergency to bypass Congress and build a wall along the southern border. Like their Republican counterparts, the Democrats have nothing but contempt for constitutional protections and will utilize any excuse to institute police state measures.



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