



New Years Is Not Public Safety Magic

January 8, 2023  by [Thomas Lemmer](#)



(Tony Webster)

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At **Secure 1776** we waited a week to issue our New Year's post to make a point. There is no special magic at the stroke of midnight ending the last day of any December. Not with the dropping of a ball in Times Square, nor with the dropping of a musical note in Nashville. Not with the flipping of the calendar to any January 1st. As far as holidays go, New Years commemorates little more than [Ground Hog Day](#) does. Time passes. It is true that most of us seek more time. Time to get things right. Many hope to achieve significant accomplishments, and have more time for enjoyment. Yet, individually and as a society we tend to waste a lot of time. We tend not to spend enough of it seeking truth. Such is the case with the public safety crisis that continues in far too many communities.

The holiday season is generally understood to include three holidays. Thanksgiving Day, which is intended to be a day of gratitude. Christmas Day commemorating for Christians the birth of the Messiah and [the hope of salvation](#). Members of the Jewish faith celebrate Hanukkah during this time. The end of the holiday season seeks to acknowledge the start of a new year. Most often, while the official holiday is "the day," it is "the eve," with the approach of midnight, that is most celebrated. Often with mass quantities of alcohol and silliness. As a police officer, my professional experience has found these midnight new year's celebrations wanting in comparison to the other holidays.

More to the point, there is no magic at midnight on New Year's Eve. Communities plagued by crime and violence are not instantly transformed. In reality, police and other public safety resources are particularly challenged by the midnight celebrations and aftermath. For communities in need of the police to maintain calm and the rapid response of emergency medical personnel, the night brings increased risk.

In cities where [lawlessness](#) is evident, the first shooting victims of the new year can come just moments after midnight. In Chicago, there were at [least 30 people shot](#) over this past New Year's holiday weekend. And, it took just 90 minutes for the city to record its [first murder of the new year](#). There was no magical end to the public safety crisis with the stroke of midnight on January First. Actually, as we have noted previously, in [Hadleyvilles there is a Ground Hog Day element](#) relative to violence.

Some Difficult Truth

Crime overall continues to rise in many places. For example, in [Chicago index crime was up](#) an alarming 41% in 2022. Carjackings in Chicago are now commonplace, and robberies in the city were up 14%. Burglaries were also up 14%. In our modern times of [non-prosecuting prosecutors](#), in Chicago (like in many big cities with such system failures) thefts were up 23% and motor vehicle thefts were up 155%.

In [New York](#), [Chicago](#), and [Los Angeles](#) there were fewer murders in 2022 than in 2021. Yes, that is better than more. But, the violence levels in these cities, and in many urban areas across the nation have merely stabilized below their 2021 peaks. Murder rates remain higher than they were before 2020, the year like no other. [We remember 2020](#). How could we forget?

As compared to 2019, [murders in Chicago during 2022 were up 39%](#). There was no magic return to more peaceful times. And while the media seeks to [blame the pandemic](#), those “in the know” know differently. Covid does not cause reckless driving, crime generally, or street violence.

Why the Rise in Lawlessness?

Lawlessness is fostered by four key factors that have been particularly problematic since May 2020. First, the weakening of the bond between the police and the communities they serve. Second, public policy approaches that have dramatically lessened proactive policing. Third, reductions in police staffing levels, and the challenges in recruiting new officers. Fourth, the desire to pretend that crime and violence can be wished away without holding chronic and violent offenders accountable.

Building From Last Year's Message

I encourage a look back at my [New Year's message from last year](#). Then I noted that 2020 was a year with many issues, including significant public safety disappointments. Further, relative to violence, 2021 was also a disappointing year. I posited that a “happy” new year in 2022 would require resolve beyond the mere use of an optimistic “Happy New Year” greeting.

According to the site, [Discover Happy Habits](#), a week into the new year, 25% of those who make new year's resolutions have already abandoned them. After one month, more than one-third will have given up, and by June 64% will have lost their resolve. The site [Fit & Well](#) cites

research that is even more bleak. They indicate that, on average, people “*stick to their new year’s resolutions for just 17.8 days before abandoning them.*” Relative to truly enhancing public safety in America, much more resolve will be required from all of us.

If We Leave the Politicians Unchecked

Politicians in big-city states are particularly adept at pandering on the issue of public safety. There is a macabre skill in simultaneously weakening the ability of the “justice” system to hold offenders accountable, while making it [harder for everyday citizens](#) to even defend themselves. Many veteran police officers have long provided a key warning. When seconds count the police may be only minutes away. With the downturn in our collective public safety resolve, the [police may be an hour away](#). The combination of systematic acceptance of lawlessness and police staffing reductions is not a good one for public safety.

It is essential for us not to be deceived by those who are seeking perpetual division for their own ideological and political purposes. When the police are one with the community, the community is safer, freer, more stable, and better positioned to help foster the improved well-being of the entire community. Those seeking and participating in police reform efforts must not lose sight of this reality.

We as an entire community must reject the efforts to [demonize the police](#). Police accountability efforts must distinguish between unintended or unavoidable tragedy, and true misconduct. As a community, we need our elected officials and civic leaders to foster unifying approaches that advance constitutional policing, reduce violence, address chronic crime conditions, improve public safety, protect victims, foster wellness, and enhance [community support for the police](#).

The New Year is Always Now

There was no magic, but in another sense, there is power perceived and reflected with the start of each new year. With the start of a “new” year, it is almost universally a time of reflection on the passage of time, and a time for contemplation as to what the future might hold, particularly if we resolve to do so.

So in this new “now year,” what will the people of America, particularly those in cities like Chicago, resolve to do? Will they demand both constitutional policing and public safety? Will

they hold accountable those that pander to the most divisive and destructive voices? Will they insist that crime victims are made a priority? Will they acknowledge that crippling the justice system and [demonizing the nation's police officers](#) weakens the very foundations needed for a society to be just, free, and safe? Will they demand more of their community leaders and elected officials? Will they hold their resolve long enough to foster true public safety?

For 2023 to be a truly “happy new year,” there must be a resolve to foster public safety. We must also resolve to fondly remember those we have lost; to shed off the limitations of past disappointments and sadness; to gain wisdom from our past experiences, and to embrace each day as an opportunity to use well the gift of time – a truly precious gift. The new is now, and each today of the coming year. Let us guard against taking time for granted, and let us not miss the moment.

This article originally appeared at [Secure 1776](#).

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