

## Fairness of county grand jury system is called into question

After nearly 60 years in judicial court-rooms and hearing rooms, there are few surprises to a seasoned lawyer. The mysterious becomes the fare of the day. Even more so in the rural venues. However, the Post-Dispatch headline comes as a surprise even to the most jaundiced lawyer: "Ex-ACLU attorney is kicked off grand jury" (Oct. 17).

Although the grand jury has long been shrouded in secrecy and mystery, I hope that most citizens are like me, a realistic pragmatist, who believe that the Lady of Justice, with the scales in her hand, still has the blindfold across her eyes. Almost sacred to this belief is that the members of a sitting grand jury are randomly, fairly and honestly selected from the public they represent.

We also believe those with pre-conceived beliefs or prejudices and demonstrated prejudicial backgrounds are winnowed out by the jury selection process, no matter how secret and mysterious it may be.

Through the Post-Dispatch's relentless efforts, we learn that one grand juror had previously filed Ferguson-related lawsuits as an ACLU attorney and was even foreman of that grand jury. Additionally, the Post-Dispatch article sets forth that he had served another grand jury. While the Post-Dispatch disclaims knowledge of wrongdoing by this grand jury member, it surely calls into serious question as to whether the grand jury system in St. Louis County is as pure as we all hope and are entitled to believe it should be.

Perhaps the statue in this county should have the Lady with the scales without the blindfold with a wink in her eye.

**Keith Mattern** • Town and Country

## McCulloch's actions breed distrust for grand jury system

We see again the unfortunate, and possibly unlawful, abuse of the grand jury

process by St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney Bob McCulloch as reported by Kim Bell ("Ex-ACLU attorney is kicked off grand jury," Oct. 17).

Having a grand juror removed, not for any proper and lawful reason, but only because the juror had pushed litigation that Mr. McCulloch dislikes, is a symptom of the scorched-earth tactics that he has become infamous for throughout our state. Such actions breed distrust for our entire system of justice at a time that very system is under relentless attack.

As for Circuit Judge Steven Goldman's removal of this juror at McCulloch's request, let us not forget the judge was a career prosecutor for many years prior to his judicial appointment which, in St. Louis County, more than speaks for itself.

**James D. Gadell** • Maplewood

## Lack of timely data on crime is embarrassing

"159\*" (Oct. 16) correctly, depressingly and embarrassingly exposes our IT infrastructure in the war on crime as one of the contributing factors — which can no longer be ignored, let alone tolerated — to our ignominious lead as the country with the world's highest incarceration rate. By comparison, the combined incarceration rate for some of the world's most technologically advanced countries (e.g., Japan, India, Germany and China) is not even half of the rate for the United States.

In addition, when "the latest FBI data, released in September, were for calendar 2014," the problem is also one of technological interconnectedness. And access to "comprehensive and timely information," is, without a doubt, essential to being able to quickly identify patterns in crimes and criminal behavior, and thus, is inexorably linked to law enforcement's ability to stop crime.

Consequently, if we, as a nation, are truly concerned with accelerating our painstakingly slow crawl toward "Equal Justice Under Law," as etched in stone above the entrance to the U.S. Supreme

Court, might not justice be better served if we arm all law enforcement agencies, from stem to stern in this whole disturbing process, with real-time statistical information.

Some may see an individual arriving at prison as a well-earned victory — regardless of guilt, innocence or the evidence — but unless we are comfortable leading the world in this area, it is absolutely necessary that local police departments and local jails have the same IT infrastructure as the state police departments and the FBI.

**Lou Horwitz** • St. Peters

## Common sense already showing what statistics won't

The article "159\*" (Oct. 16) was interesting only in that it lacked any indication of common sense in the soaring rate of murder. Not just here in St. Louis, but Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland and more. The criminal element is feeling empowered, as never before. Knowing full well police officers all over the country are afraid to do their jobs. Unwilling to take the risk, if placed in a situation they used lethal force, they could be Monday morning-quarterbacked into criminal charges, fired, sued or even face prison. Even if they did everything possible to avoid using lethal force as a last resort, they would be crucified for it. From the lowest street thug to the highest drug supplier, it's understood the police are backing off.

Yet, the experts bemoan there isn't enough data, statistics or formulas to ascertain what common sense is already providing. Now no one doubts that changes were needed in many police and court systems. Better transparency and equality were needed, but I think in our haste to correct these problems we have created more dangerous problems.

If the police are reluctant make mistakes, of which every human being has a right to, crime soars, murders increase and the citizens who know who killed whom, why and where are thinking if they can't