



# MILWAUKEE DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS

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*Members of the Wisconsin State Assembly and the Wisconsin State Senate*

March 23, 2017

Senator Alberta Darling  
Representative John Nygren  
Co-Chairs, Joint Finance Committee

Dear Senator Darling, Representative Nygren, and members of the Joint Finance Committee,

The undersigned members of the Wisconsin State Legislature's Milwaukee Delegation formally request that the State of Wisconsin increase the amount of shared revenue being sent to the City of Milwaukee and other local governments around the State.

We are concerned that shared revenue has not increased for local municipalities while costs continue to rise. Public safety expenditures consume the largest part of municipal budgets and are being driven up by wage settlements and increasing costs to fund pensions and health benefits. Revenue collections cannot keep pace – especially since levy limits rise more slowly than wage increases. This has created a situation where it is increasingly unsustainable to maintain the staffing levels of police and fire departments.

For example, the City of Milwaukee's Police Department budget is now higher than the collected city's total property tax levy. At the same time, Milwaukee's economy is growing which has contributed to rising income and sales tax revenues for State government. We are requesting that shared revenue be reevaluated to fairly and accurately reflect the growing costs of such essential services and to better reflect the contributions local governments make to our State's economic development.

If current trends continue, the Milwaukee Police Department's cost-to-continue budget is projected to have increasing deficits for the next five years. In 2018, the total police cost is projected to increase \$9.2 million from 2017 while levy limits will only allow for a \$3.9 million increase citywide. Compounding this, the shared revenue payment remains fixed at \$219 million. The Police and Fire Departments cannot be sustained at this rate without an increase in shared revenue or some other new revenue stream.

Milwaukee's Police and Fire Departments provide indispensable services to our community. Unfortunately, shared revenue has not increased as the needs of the community have. The City of Milwaukee is being forced to decide between fully equipping these departments and vastly reducing other city services like libraries and road maintenance. Putting Milwaukee's public safety at risk with a tenuous financial picture is a no-win situation for any of us. Not for the city or the state. We urge you to work with us to find a solution.



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Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Representative David Crowley  
Chair of the Milwaukee Delegation

Representative Evan Goyke  
Assembly District 18

Representative Jonathan Brostoff  
Assembly District 19

Senator LaTonya Johnson  
Senate District 6

Representative David Bowen  
Assembly District 10

Representative Fred Kessler  
Assembly District 12

Senator Tim Carpenter  
Senate District 3

Representative Christine Sinicki  
Assembly District 20

Representative Jason Fields  
Assembly District 11

Senator Lena Taylor  
Senate District 4



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A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Riemer'.

Representative Daniel Riemer  
Assembly District 7

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JoCasta Zamarripa'.

Representative JoCasta Zamarripa  
Assembly District 8

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leon Young'.

Representative Leon Young  
Assembly District 16

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Josh Zepnick'.

Representative Josh Zepnick  
Assembly District 9