



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

August 21, 2017

Governor Scott Walker
115 East Capitol
Madison WI 53702

Wisconsin State Assembly
17 West Main Street
Room 401
Madison, WI 53703

Wisconsin State Senate
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Walker and Honorable Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature:

I recently proposed that the City of Milwaukee be authorized to levy a 0.5% local sales tax to fund public safety, increasing the number of police officers in the Milwaukee Police Department.

That proposal, enclosed with this letter, addresses two significant long-term problems with Milwaukee's finances. First, the cost of existing Police staffing, equipment, and benefits is greater than the city's entire property tax levy, and grows each year. Second, Milwaukee's ability to fund the Police Department at our current staffing level is capped, and made more difficult by reductions to State shared revenue over the last 10 years.

I am proposing a local sales tax and referendum to address both of those issues. A 0.5% local sales tax would generate revenue that would offset cost increases to Police and Fire budgets. That revenue would also allow the city to use local property tax dollars to provide crime prevention services.

At the heart of this proposal is fairness. Milwaukee is the state's economic engine, generating employment and revenue for the entire state. The city is a national and regional destination. Under our current revenue structure, the burden of paying for the services and infrastructure to keep our city safe falls entirely on local property owners. A sales tax makes the financing of those services fairer, and makes our recent economic growth more beneficial for our residents and the region.

I deliberately included a referendum in this proposal because I think the residents who pay property and sales taxes deserve to decide if an increase in police officers is worth increasing their taxes. We have had a very robust local discussion about public safety and crime reduction this year. If the Legislature and Governor authorize a sales tax for Milwaukee, our residents should have the opportunity to decide if this is the best way to deal with our public safety funding challenges.

I am proud of Milwaukee's booming downtown, great neighborhoods, and the quality of life we offer our residents and visitors. I also know we have challenges, and we will continue to work hard on solving those problems. This proposal increases our ability to address public safety challenges and stabilize our city budget.

I look forward to discussing this proposal with you, and respectfully ask for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Tom Barrett
Mayor