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## ***Are Fire and Police Commissioners and Nominees Not Allowed to State the Facts or their Opinions about the Milwaukee Police Department?***

**Milwaukee**—The African American Roundtable supports the appointment of Everett Cocroft for the Fire and Police Commission and calls on the City Council to approve him promptly.

On Thursday, Mr. Everett Cocroft was supposed to be confirmed for appointment to the Fire and Police Commission at the Public Safety and Health Committee meeting, but his confirmation was delayed because Mr. Cocroft emailed an alderman over two years ago stating several facts about the Milwaukee Police Department.

Mr. Cocroft, a property owner in the city of Milwaukee, emailed an alderman, “I am vehemently opposed to any property tax increase to pay for additional police officers who now by state law are now and can live outside the city of Milwaukee.” He also stated he was, “vehemently opposed to the proposed referendum to hire 150 additional police officers who are not required to reside in our great city and will burden property owners with yet another tax that won’t make us any safer.” Cocroft went on to say, “Milwaukee police are reactionary and not proactive, and the only thing they guard is their wallets, pension, and benefits. They abuse overtime and support a culture of no snitching. Until they begin to treat residents with dignity and respect they should trim the FAT, tighten their belts and freeze wages. They already cost us millions in lawsuits from excessive force, sexual abuse and killing people.”

The officers in the Sterling Brown case bragged about getting overtime pay when many of them weren’t needed at the scene. Police misconduct has cost taxpayers millions of dollars from the unlawful cavity searches and killing of Dontre Hamilton and others. We’ve all heard about the “blue wall of silence” that reinforces his point about the culture of no snitching. The ACLU lawsuit revealed that police have not been treating residents with dignity and respect in regards to exposing the culture that supported racial profiling that resulted in unlawful stops. Mr. Cocroft has the right to voice his concerns as a taxpayer with an alderman.

We do not believe this should disqualify him from serving on a civilian board as a commissioner. The concerns that Mr. Cocroft raised are truthful, valid and should not disqualify him from serving. I spoke with Cocroft and he said, “He likes giving back and serving and can be fair.” He also went on to say, “If somebody is wrong, it’s wrong. Wrong is wrong, and right is right. I am not beholden to the mayor, the aldermen, but the community.” If the city is looking for qualified candidate to serve, they should appoint him.

The work of the Fire and Police Commission is critical to assuring Milwaukee residents voices are heard in police and fire matters and as a means to ensuring more responsive and effective government. We look forward to Mr. Cocroft's appointment in the coming months and reiterate to Mayor Barrett the need for nine commissioners and sharing more broadly the opportunity for city of Milwaukee residents to apply to be considered for an appointment.

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*The African American Roundtable (AART) is a coalition of community leaders and organizations that are led by, or primarily do their work, in the African American community. AART's mission is to improve the quality of life for Wisconsin's African American community through issue-based civic engagement.*