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Common Council President

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15th District Alderman



**Willie L. Hines, Jr.**

*City of Milwaukee Common Council*

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September 1, 2009

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## **Yesterday's MPS Governance Press Conference**

With Governor Doyle and Mayor Barrett

August 31, 2009

Formal Remarks by Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr.

Good afternoon, it is my pleasure to be here with all of you today.

First, I want to thank Governor Doyle and Mayor Barrett for their leadership on this issue. They are not interested in obtaining more power. These men genuinely care about the future of our school district and the future of our city – after all, the prosperity of our city and the quality of our school district are dependant upon one another.

I also want to commend our State Senators and State Representatives who will likely wrestle long and hard with the governance structure at MPS. I know that their intentions are also genuine, and I know that they will serve their constituents to the best of their abilities.

Perhaps most importantly, I also want to commend the thousands of teachers who serve our children, day in and day out. These teachers need to be supported and encouraged by MPS. Just as our students deserve a high-quality school district, so do our teachers.

Personally, I believe in the future of MPS. I have my own kids at MPS. But the system needs drastic improvement. The current form of governance at MPS has been in place for several decades, but recent failings – academic, administrative and financial – have led to the federal government pushing for substantial, dramatic changes.

Let's be clear, the fact that MPS is performing poorly is not a matter of opinion. It is based upon the educational standards of the federal government. The Obama Administration does not care about our bruised egos or private ambitions. This administration is making strategic funding changes, so that the next generation of Americans – EVERY American – can be educated.

This is not the time for tinkering. This is not the time to merely create a new department or shift specific responsibility from one area of MPS to another. If we want to drastically improve MPS, we must start at the top. We must start with the governance structure.

**-More-**

## **MPS Press Conference/ADD ONE**

If a computer crashes and can no longer function, it is foolish to merely examine the keyboard or fiddle with the mouse. You have to deal with the hard drive. If a car breaks down, you don't kick the tires. You don't check the radio or put some new paint on the exterior. You open up the hood and look at the engine.

And when a school district as a whole is broken, which MPS is, you need to look at the governance structure. The governance structure is the hard drive behind MPS. The governance structure is the engine that runs MPS. It makes no sense to talk about changing MPS without dealing with the governance structure.

There are really three main reasons that people leave Milwaukee: taxes, crime and schools. The City of Milwaukee has managed to keep its own tax increases below the rate of inflation, but MPS is raising its taxes by double digits on an annual basis; we have a crime strategy that is working with our new chief, and MPD should be commended for our plummeting crime statistics. But the City of Milwaukee has absolutely no say in our school system, and that has to change. Strong families are fleeing our city, due to structural inadequacies at MPS.

I care deeply about the future of this city. We have to take bold action to improve the current state of MPS, because it represents the future our city. I am proud to stand with anyone, regardless of skin color, who cares so deeply about improving the lives of our children.