

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

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## City of Milwaukee Common Council Members Standing with Wisconsin Workers

### **Statement of Alderman Ashanti Hamilton, Alderman Milele A. Coggs, Alderman Nik Kovac and Alderman Willie C. Wade February 17, 2011**

Governor Walker's agenda is clearly based on a "divide and conquer" motif as he wrongly pits public sector workers against private sector workers as if their core values aren't the same. "We're in the same boat, facing the same recession," Alderman Hamilton said. "The solution to our economic crisis isn't for financially hard-pressed workers across the board to fight one another."

"Fire and police union officials should be cautious as Governor Walker may be patting them on the head today, they too may be led to the guillotine tomorrow," Alderman Hamilton said.

"If we were truly dealing with accurate financial tallies, the police and fire unions would be included in this package. In many cities, the largest expense is the fire and police budget," Alderman Coggs said. "You cannot balance the budget on the backs of the workers, and on only some of the workers at that."

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## **Budget Repair /ADD ONE**

“Quality legislation takes time. Real solutions come after hearty debate, public input and continued discussion. That’s not what’s happening here. One drastic solution has been proffered with no room for alternatives from those involved,” Alderwoman Coggs said. “The real impact of the legislation is not being considered. This has impact not only on worker morale, but also on the state’s financial bottom line. Less money made by public workers means less money they can spend in the state. Wisconsin’s economy will feel the burden in new ways.”

“That’s what government is,” Alderman Hamilton said. “Heavy debate, amending ideas, having discussion and welcoming input is necessary and part of how good ideas are turned into practice. We’re not seeing that here.”

“We have to take the time to evaluate all potential solutions and simply eliminating bargaining without searching for public buy-in is an ineffective way to approach an already demoralized workforce,” Alderman Wade said.

“It’s true that state and local governments are staring at long-term structural deficits,” Alderman Kovac said, “and that public sector employees will need to share growing costs of pensions and health care, but this can be accomplished through collective bargaining. There is a way to achieve fiscal responsibility without sacrificing core values.”

“The City of Milwaukee’s 2010 and 2011 budgets are an example of how that can be done. Our hard-working unions have demonstrated their willingness to collaborate on cost solutions during these tough economic times. After all, they are taxpayers, too. We are all in this together, and the more we treat each other with respect, the more we all will be willing to shoulder our corner of the load,” Ald. Kovac said.

Wisconsin is being touted as a national example in relationship to collective bargaining. The world is watching how this legislation evolves. Sadly, it’s not evolving through public debate, thoughtful process or well-evidenced economic strategies. We do not support this bill and can only ask that the workers it affects be allowed to be a part of the conversation.