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ROBERT G. DONOVAN
Alderman, 8th District

Alderman Donovan
(414) 708-9417

Enough is enough with co-sleeping deaths

Alderman Donovan calls for charges in recent infant death

Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan **January 14, 2013**

I am calling on prosecutors to bring charges against a Milwaukee mother who last week suffocated her seven-day-old son after drinking alcohol and taking pain pills. In my opinion, when warranted we need to start treating these co-sleeping deaths not as “accidental deaths,” but rather as deaths resulting from neglect and/or abuse.

Unlike our mayor, who thinks we just need a stronger ad campaign and more glossy brochures about safe sleeping environments, I am asking for prosecutorial discretion and common sense when it is found that an infant has died as the result of a parent or caregiver who was under the influence of alcohol or drugs in a co-sleeping situation. Think about it: if a parent falls asleep and their toddler wanders outside and is hit by a car, neglect charges would be filed! Here we have babies dying because of the neglectful behavior of a parent or guardian!

We had 10 co-sleeping deaths in Milwaukee last year – almost one per month – and that is absolutely shameful. In these co-sleeping deaths, it is almost as if the lives of these children don’t matter, and it begs the question – “What is wrong with our society?”

As the father of five children, I know well that there is no job more demanding and more challenging than being a good parent. Parents in need of assistance must reach out for help, and if they need a safe place for their baby to sleep, they need to contact the Health Department for a free crib (286-8620).

Last, there are certain problems in society that government simply cannot solve. However, holding people accountable for their behavior and actions is something that government **MUST** do, and I am calling for that action now.

We need to do all we can to prevent even one more co-sleeping death in Milwaukee.