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Attack on residency continues Governor's "divide and conquer" strategy

Statement of Alderman Michael J. Murphy February 25, 2013

Governor Walker's state budget proposal to end residency requirements for municipalities statewide is one of the most serious and direct attacks on local control and local governance in the history of the State of Wisconsin.

It is quite apparent that the Governor is overreaching here, looking to "fix" something that is not only not broken, but has worked well for the City of Milwaukee since 1938.

What's even more baffling is that Governor Walker seems to be tossing aside his usual disdain for big government meddling in the affairs of local municipalities. The Governor and the state Legislature are interfering directly with local municipalities' abilities to manage their own policies and budgets. What ever happened to giving us the "tools" we need to run our cities, towns, villages and counties?

Frankly, I fail to see why this is a matter of concern to state lawmakers, and why it is a part of the Governor's state budget proposal. How many jobs will this action create? Of course, the answer is "none." Many communities throughout the state believe public employees should live among the taxpayers who pay their checks and have some form of a residency requirement, and each community must decide what works best for them on the local level.

Governor Walker's residency proposal is very reminiscent of his admitted strategy of "divide and conquer"—this time pitting groups of public employees and citizens against one another, all as a way to provide political payback to the police and fire unions in Milwaukee that have supported him during the past several years.

I urge all Republican state legislators to take a stand against the Governor's residency proposal, not only because the proposal is hypocritical and goes against GOP principles that abhor big government, but also because it unduly interferes with local governance, and threatens to destabilize Milwaukee and its future as a key economic engine for the entire state.