



Fire and Police Commission

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Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Editorial Board:

RE: 2011 Senate Bill 30 – Residency

It is important as we deal with this issue that nobody get demonized. We have seen the debate over residency unfold elsewhere. We can understand why any worker is attracted to the suburbs particularly given that so many of them are paying tuition to school their children. But we see a negative fiscal, operational and cultural effect on the city we protect if residency is stripped.

Fiscally, the city must steel itself for a loss of the tax base and the loss of local control.

Operationally, in the case of major events like blizzard of 2011, we need to be able to muster our police officers and firefighters without delay in order to preserve the public safety.

Culturally, we have seen workers lose their connection with the neighborhoods they serve. We have worked hard to improve community relations. Much ground is lost when our workers are seen as a “protected class” and as “strangers.” Internally, this move pits employees of the city against each other.

This bill attempts to solve a problem that does not exist. The ability to recruit qualified, enthusiastic candidates to the Milwaukee Police and Fire Departments has not been hampered by the current residency requirement. During the last recruitment period, the city saw 5,711 applicants for the position of firefighter and 3,569 applicants for the position of police officer. The data does not back up the “solution” offered by this bill.

Viable cities are the result of a delicate balance of economic and social diversity. We ask that the state’s major city not be devalued.

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