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Police Chief's Comp Days Moratorium Would Blister Morale, Add Untold Costs

If as Chief Nannette Hegerty says, "Image is everything," then the image of Milwaukee's uniformed officers may be one of added stress this summer.

Ald. Bob Donovan, chair of the Common Council's Public Safety Committee, said he's been made aware of an internal police department staffing directive from Chief Hegerty that bars all uniformed officers from taking any additional discretionary or comp days off between May and September. "I predict that this directive will actually hurt the city's ability to fight crime, because it will have a very direct, negative impact on the morale of our front line officers," the alderman said.

"These officers have the most stressful job that could be devised by humankind, and they deserve their days off," said Ald. Donovan.

Ald. Joe Dudzik said he believes the directive will result in adding millions to MPD's overtime budget because officers will be "banking" comp time that they're not taking. "If this is such a good idea now, then why haven't we done it for the last three years? It looks to me like this chief will end up saddling the taxpayers of the City of Milwaukee with one hefty bill during her final months on the job," he said.

Sick leave abuse, an increase in cases of excessive force and injuries to officers and "other negative effects of increased mental and physical fatigue" will result from the directive, Ald. Donovan said.

Ald. Donovan said the directive can be traced directly to the Mayor's Office. "I can't help but view this as an attempt to salvage this administration's failures of years past at dealing meaningfully with our city's public safety problems," he said.