
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Terry Witkowski
414-731-0472

Alderman Wants Consolidated Government Study On Fall Ballot

Ald. Witkowski says City Residents Deserve the Opportunity to Vote on Whether a Study of the Consolidation of Two Governments Should Take Place

Ald. Terry L. Witkowski wants to know what Milwaukee residents think of the idea of the city assuming responsibility for most or all government functions currently performed by Milwaukee County through **dissolution of the County and creation of a consolidated city/county form of government.**

Ald. Witkowski is sponsoring a resolution directing the Election Commission to place an advisory referendum on the consolidation of certain City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County functions on the November 7, 2006 ballot. Ald. Witkowski said, "Many services provided by city and county agencies are similar, if not identical, and I believe our residents should have the opportunity to say whether we should study such a consolidation."

"I think the timing is right and this is the first time in my lifetime that I think the public would support government consolidation," said Ald. Witkowski. "By using a referendum, representatives of all levels of government would know how the public feels about consolidation, and would be able to judge if they should support it and work for it before a penny is spent looking at it," Ald. Witkowski added.

"There is widespread community concern about Milwaukee County's declining ability to provide public services in such key areas as parks, transit and law enforcement," said Ald. Witkowski, "And one way to achieve operational and cost efficiencies in government is to have only one unit of government."

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Consolidated City/County Gov't/ADD ONE

Ald. Witkowski says a referendum asking about a consolidation would allow a study to determine if duplication of services could be eliminated and the cost of providing services could be reduced by dissolving Milwaukee County and having the City of Milwaukee perform most or all of its functions.

In recent years, the City of Milwaukee has faced a number of fiscal challenges, including rising employee health care costs, declining inflation adjusted state shared revenue payments and a state legislature imposed tax levy "freeze." The alderman added the goal of the freeze was to have local governments look for efficiencies in services.

"In spite of the fiscal restraints the city has been able to maintain a high level of service to city residents without increasing the property tax rate," said Ald. Witkowski, "While Milwaukee County, faced with many of the same fiscal challenges, is experiencing an ongoing and worsening budget crisis."

The consolidation of city and county services and functions has been successfully implemented in major U.S. cities, including Indianapolis, Louisville and Nashville, and Ald. Witkowski says the costs savings that could result from dissolution of Milwaukee County and consolidation of services under the City of Milwaukee could go a long way in addressing metropolitan Milwaukee's image as a high-tax area, an image which hurts the city's ability to retain and attract businesses and residents.

The proposed referendum question for the November 7, 2006 ballot states:

"Shall the City of Milwaukee, with assistance from other units of government and other interested organizations, study the feasibility and potential cost savings of the city assuming responsibility for government functions currently performed by Milwaukee County and, if such a consolidation of functions is feasible and financially beneficial, work with the State of Wisconsin and other municipalities in Milwaukee County to dissolve the county and create a consolidated city/county form of government?"