

Statement of Ald. Joe Davis, Sr. March 2, 2009

This past Friday I attended the State Assembly's Committee on Education Reform meeting held by State Representative Annette Polly Williams at the Milwaukee Public Schools administrative central office. The purpose of the meeting was the American Recover and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and its Summary of Educational Provisions. I attended to show support for MPS and its school children, in particular those children who are students in MPS and who are also in the foster care system.

As the meeting began to progress, members of the school board must have come to the conclusion that I was there to speak of the city's takeover of MPS as some of my colleagues have suggested. I became amazed as board member after board member pontificated, making long speeches about how the school board was being responsible governing the school district. I guess my presence must have given cause to those who wanted to use the moment to justify themselves, although that was not the intent of the meeting.

As I made my statement to the committee expressing my support of the children who attend the MPS system, I could not help to notice that some school board members realized that they had expended unnecessary energy on an issue that was irrelevant to the purpose they had convened for. I was surprised of the tone of board members on the governance issue, but few offered ideas for the newly allocated funds from the federal government.

Then I get home, check my emails, and open an email from Representative Williams to Assembly Speaker Representative Mike Sheridan about Assembly Bill 89. Those of us who know Representative Williams realize that she fights the good fight, and to my surprise this bill will eliminate residency requirements for MPS teachers starting in 2011, and one of the sponsors of the bill was right in front of them on the committee. I was shocked that the public had to listen to the rhetoric of school board members about governance, but not a mention or concern of potentially losing residents (teachers). Competent public officials understand how crucial it is to have a stable tax base for current and future budgeting purposes.

Earlier in the week, I attended a play at James Madison Academic Campus and Lancaster Elementary School performed by the Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company called "D' Tension" and I was very impressed with the student population's behavior. So many times we hear of the negative incidents within the MPS, but not the positive, personal experience that exists that I witnessed.

My heart is, and will always be with the MPS system, but I hope better priorities are put in place from those who are on the MPS Board of Directors when the true issues that need to be addressed are right under their noses.

###