



JAMES N. WITKOWIAK
ALDERMAN, 12TH DISTRICT

Residency Matters: Working AND Living in Your Community Has Impact

**Statement of Alderman James N. Witkowiak
March 10, 2011**

I strongly and whole-heartedly urge Governor Walker and the Wisconsin State Legislature to cease all efforts to end the City of Milwaukee residency rule for police and firefighters. This long-established rule benefits all the residents of the City of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Police and Fire Departments.

These careers pay well and they are currently filled by City of Milwaukee residents who choose to work for the city. Milwaukee is not unlike other large cities and faces a serious unemployment problem as well as other economic challenges and as a result must preserve its own employment enclaves.

Most recent application openings for the Police and Fire Departments saw thousands of city residents applying for the jobs. Good jobs with good benefits are sorely needed by many in this city—especially in my near south side district.

My district has a solid base of hardworking and dedicated residents – Hispanics and others – who possess an excellent capacity to fill public safety jobs and simultaneously serve and connect with their communities—a connection that is vital to the city and community.

It makes no sense and is unfair to make city residents, whose taxes directly fund these jobs, compete with and lose opportunities to those who are not only not Milwaukeeans but who are also unlikely to become residents if the rules were changed. There is no shortage of current or future city residents who are qualified to be police officers or firefighters.

Milwaukeeans have a vital stake in this city on many levels. They are much more likely to care about the overall welfare of the city than are non-residents.

At the end of the day, soldiers fight for their own countries. Mercenaries fight for wages.

-More-

Residency Matters/ADD ONE

Every current officer and firefighter knew the employment rule and came to the city asking for a good job—period.

Current public safety job holders were either residents or took the job and then complied with the residency rule. So must future applicants.

This city cannot afford to lose its solid base of resident police officers and firefighters, and to make a state law to end our residency rule is ill-thought out and politically unwise.

I urge Governor Walker and the legislature to end this effort at once.