



**Willie L. Hines, Jr.**  
*City of Milwaukee Common Council*

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January 12, 2012

Mr. Rob Henken  
President, Public Policy Forum  
633 West Wisconsin Avenue  
Suite 406  
Milwaukee, WI 53203

Mr. Henken:

In February of 1961, the Police Protection Committee of the Metropolitan Study Commission for Milwaukee, Wisconsin issued a report titled “Technical Report on Police Protection in Milwaukee County.” Among its recommendations was the following concerning the consolidation of police services in Milwaukee County: “(The Committee) believes that Milwaukee County and its nineteen municipalities can likewise establish some of the urgently needed central services by cooperation through contractual agreement *without* the necessity of a basic reorganization...*the local communities must recognize the need of closer cooperation in securing more adequate police protection in the entire county and that they must be willing to participate in effecting the types of coordination required to achieve this purpose.*” (p. 10, emphasis original) The Committee wrote that this cooperation was needed to address the interrelated problems of rising crime rate, increasing demand for services, and diminishing available resources.

The Committee was right 50 years ago and remains so today. We did not listen then, but we must listen now.

The challenges that confronted Milwaukee County in 1961 have not disappeared or diminished. Crime remains unacceptably high throughout the area – suburb and city alike. The City of Milwaukee is not alone in seeing the share of its annual budget dedicated to public safety increase to the point where, before too long, the municipal portion of the tax levy will be little more than a transfer payment to public safety agencies.

Just this morning, the Milwaukee County Sheriff testified before the City’s Public Safety Committee about the potentially harmful cuts in service that will result from his

department having to lay off deputies. He indicated that these cuts would include service to our parks, lakefront, and even transit system; amenities serving every citizen of this county.

I would ask your agency, as a top policy analysis body serving our area, to study the consolidation of police services in Milwaukee County and to make specific recommendations in the following areas:

1. How far should consolidation be taken? What “best practices” models are out there that communities like Milwaukee County could emulate?
2. What are the structural and institutional obstacles to police service consolidation and how have other communities removed them?
3. What are the potential benefits – and hazards – of police service consolidation?

Like those who wrote the technical report 50 years ago, I do not favor the creation of metropolitan government. Few, if any, of our communities are prepared to embrace the sorts of changes that would be required. We can no longer afford, however, to pretend that our parochial model of providing police services is either sustainable or of benefit to those we serve.

Your agency has provided admirable service to this community for almost a century. I would ask it to do so again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. L. Hines, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alderman Willie L. Hines, Jr.  
Common Council President