

## COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**  
Alderman, 8th District

## Barrett & Council to Walker and Legislature:

**"Give me my ball, I'm going home"**

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan**

**July 1, 2013**

Here is a good one – if you don't like laws, no problem, just ignore them. Better yet, order other people to do the same. Wow, amazing. I must have been absent the day they taught that in civics class.

As bizarre as it all sounds, apparently that is what our city fathers may be planning on doing regarding the residency issue. However, in retrospect, the strategy is brilliant. I plan on using it myself. I'm going to encourage Milwaukeeans who oppose the streetcar to just ignore their next tax bill. How about it, anyone with me?

Without a doubt this residency issue has taken on a life of its own. I think it's important that we put a few things in perspective.

Let me begin by simply saying this – I have never had a problem with requiring city employees to live within the city. Since we pay their wages (and if we can require it), it makes good economic sense to do so. Is that selfish? You bet it is and I admit it. Having said that, I can also understand and appreciate the arguments on the other side of the issue.

This residency issue (city employees seeking to have it loosened or removed) has been around for decades -- going as far back as the sixties. Yet no one can deny that it has certainly picked up steam under Tom Barrett's watch and we need to ask ourselves why. It can't be because the Republicans are in control of the Legislature or that the fire and police unions endorsed a Republican Governor, as those things have happened before.

Could it possibly be that in the minds of an increasing number of city employees Milwaukee is headed in the wrong direction? Could it be our continued failures at meaningfully improving MPS? Could it be our failure to offer a plan for public safety? Could it be our stubbornly high property taxes? Or maybe it's because the Mayor seems bound and determined to push through a streetcar that no one wants while at the same time failing to solve any real problems.

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Can anyone remember the Mayor objecting so vehemently when the issue of teacher residency was discussed? I certainly can't. Could that be because the teachers union endorsed Tom Barrett for Governor?

And since we're on the topic of union endorsements, I can't help but chuckle when the Mayor (in his righteous indignation) condemns the Governor for engaging in "payback" to the police and fire unions. His performance would rival that of Claude Rains in "Casablanca" who stated "I'm shocked – shocked to find that gambling is going on here." Now whether it is payback or not is rather immaterial, but come on Tom, the concept is certainly not new to politics. I shouldn't have to point out that there are any number of people working at City Hall who owe their position and paychecks to supporting your past campaigns.

And now this battle has become even more bizarre. Apparently, Council members will be asked to support a resolution tomorrow ignoring State law and ordering other city employees to do the same. **Never mind the oath we take as Aldermen to uphold the State Constitution, or does that oath exclude duly enacted State laws?** I'm told that this effort is being engineered by the Mayor's office. No surprise there, but sad that that high office is being tarnished in such a way. Needless to say, if this insanity passes it passes absent of my support.

I should add that civil disobedience on high moral grounds has its place in our society, but this is not one of those issues and Tom Barrett is no Mahatma Gandhi. Sadly, what Mayor Barrett has become is a very bitter man and that bitterness over his continued and mounting failures is clouding his decision-making and is impacting us all.

Finally, in the wise words of John Norquist, "**You can't build a city on pity.**" Yet that is precisely what the Mayor seems to be doing. The Mayor needs to listen to his own message. His belief that thousands of city employees can't wait to move out speaks volumes about the type of city Milwaukee has become. OK Tom, then let's roll up our sleeves and fix it. Let's make Milwaukee the kind of city an employee (or anyone, for that matter) would be a fool to want to move out of. In a nutshell, quit whining, take a chill pill and let's get to work!