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If residency requirement is lifted, Mayor Barrett needs to look in the mirror to see who's to blame

Statement of Alderman Bob Donovan February 18, 2013

If the City of Milwaukee's residency requirement is lifted for police and fire department personnel, our mayor can simply look in the mirror and point the finger of blame at himself.

That's right; the mayor will have NO ONE to blame but himself.

In 2011, he asked the city's fire and police unions for concessions to help the city avoid massive service cuts and layoffs. They responded in good faith, and in fact the police union leadership indicated that it would be willing to consider changes that would bring an immediate \$11-\$12 million in savings and \$184 million over the next 25 years.

In return, the police union leadership asked the mayor to consider loosening the residency requirement. Through surrogates (apparently the mayor is too important to ever meet personally with police or fire union leaders, unless he's seeking their endorsement) the mayor responded by saying that he would not agree to consider *any* such changes. If they wanted to seek such changes they would need to go to Madison (and so they did).

They called your bluff, mayor, and we will see what happens.

The city now faces the very real possibility that legislators in Madison will lift the residency requirement, and in exchange for **ZERO** savings incentives for the city from the police and fire unions.

As I stated clearly in my letter to the governor last month (asking that he expand school choice in Milwaukee by removing all eligibility requirements), residency is important to the overall wellbeing of the city, and it makes economic sense for us to require our employees to live in the city. Is it selfish to require city workers to live in the city? You bet it is!

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However, it is clear the mayor missed a great opportunity to get some key concessions from the unions that may have prevented them from going to Madison and directly petitioning the governor on lifting the residency requirement. But just as our mayor misses so many opportunities to address our serious challenges with crime/public safety, schools, and taxes, he also swung and missed – in a big way – on the residency issue.

The sad reality is the years of Mayor Tom Barrett will be remembered as “years the locusts ate” (thank you Winston Churchill!).

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