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TONY ZIELINSKI
ALDERMAN, 14TH DISTRICT

Statement of Alderman Tony Zielinski August 12, 2015

Milwaukee is a town that loves its motorcycles. It is the proud home of Harley-Davidson, and not a summer passes without the rumble of bikes in the streets. Milwaukee has even hosted some of the largest motorcycle parades in history commemorating various Harley-Davidson anniversaries. The vast majority of riders have always been peaceful and law-abiding, showing respect for their fellow motorists and the communities through which they ride.

Last weekend, however, the “Miltown Throwdown” demonstrated that there is another side to motorcycle culture. Individuals associated with this event blocked traffic, drove recklessly, damaged property and otherwise made themselves a public nuisance. I witnessed a few of these incidents and did what I could to prevent further harm, but I also decided then and there to do what I could to make sure this sort of thing doesn’t happen again.

This morning I met with representatives of the Milwaukee Police Department, the office of the City Attorney and the Department of Public Works to come up with an comprehensive strategy. The following was determined:

1. Those individuals already identified as having interfered with law enforcement and otherwise engaging in the most reckless behavior will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.
2. I will be introducing legislation on September 1 to make participation in an unpermitted gathering of this sort punishable by a forfeiture of up to \$500.
3. I will be working with local law enforcement to ensure that they are prepared to react to any future events organized by this same group. Knowing that we live in a time of difficult budgets and regrettable police officer furloughs, I will be working to ensure that the revenue from the forfeitures mentioned above are turned over to the Milwaukee Police Department.

The disruption of a community in this way, if the broken windows theory is to be believed, can be every bit as disruptive to residents’ mental well-being as a robbery or a burglary. I want to join with my colleagues on the Common Council to do whatever we can to make our city safe for everyone—including those who want to enjoy it on a motorcycle operated safely and legally.

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