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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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March 25, 2016

Ald. Terry L. Witkowski  
(414) 286-2883

## **Roll-out news conference set for “Keep the Change” initiative**

*News event set for Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> to include residents and business owners*

The city’s newly-created “**Keep the Change**” program – aimed at addressing the city’s burgeoning panhandling problem – will be launched during a news conference next week at N. 27<sup>th</sup> St. and W. St. Paul Ave.

The news conference, to be hosted by **Alderman Terry L. Witkowski**, the primary sponsor and author of the multifaceted legislation that created the “Keep the Change” program, will include **Alderman Robert J. Bauman, local business owners, residents, and other neighborhood stakeholders**. Representatives from **the Milwaukee Police Department** and **Safe and Sound** have also been invited to participate. The news conference will take place at **11 a.m. Wednesday, March 30** at the BP Gas Station located at 405 N. 27<sup>th</sup> St. **Media coverage is invited.**

Alderman Witkowski said samples of **Keep the Change signage and informational materials** will be displayed at Tuesday’s news conference, and the public and businesses will learn how they can receive program materials. “By far the most important facet of Keep the Change is informing the public about other ways of helping people in need, and that first step of providing resources and information will take place at the news conference,” he said.

Alderman Witkowski, chair of the Public Safety Committee, said Milwaukee and other cities are seeing a growing number of panhandlers, especially individuals standing at intersections, near off-ramps and on medians asking for money. He said the Keep the Change initiative will offer common sense alternative options and information about resources, with the overall goal of reducing panhandling.

**-More-**

## **Roll-Out for Keep the Change/ADD ONE**

The initiative, **approved unanimously** by the Common Council earlier this month, will feature a city-wide informational campaign discouraging panhandling by encouraging Milwaukee residents to “Keep the Change” and consider giving to a local non-profit instead of a person who is panhandling. Donations to charities that provide shelter, food, clothing and other services will be suggested, and the initiative will also include the distribution of informational cards (relating to the availability of social services through the Milwaukee County 2-1-1 hotline) and creation of a city website to act as a clearinghouse for resources and places to donate.

Additionally, the program will nurture partnerships with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) that are engaged to discourage giving to panhandlers while encouraging donations to charities providing food, shelter and other key services.

Studies have shown that donations given to panhandlers are frequently used to support dependencies, and rarely result in any long-term improvement in the panhandlers’ quality of life. Keep the Change aims to both reduce the number of panhandlers funding dependencies through donations and to provide meaningful support for those who are affected by homelessness, Alderman Witkowski has said.