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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Terry L. Witkowski  
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## **Proposal seeks ballot measure on hiring 150 MPD officers**

Public Safety Committee member Alderman Terry L. Witkowski has drafted Common Council legislation seeking a November referendum vote on whether the city can increase its tax levy to provide a “surge force” of 150 new Milwaukee police officers over five years.

**The proposal – co-sponsored by Alderman Tony Zielinski – will be heard during a special meeting of the Council’s Judiciary and Legislation Committee at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, July 25 in room 301-B at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.**

“I am raising the question as to whether we have support for a surge hiring of officers, such as was done several years ago in New York City when thousands of new officers were brought on board,” he said. “The path to get the item on the November ballot is complicated, and it can only be done as part of the city’s (2017) budget process. The timing is critical that it be considered now.”

According to Alderman Witkowski, under the proposal the surge force of 150 officers would be funded for five years and then – through retirements and normal attrition – officer staffing levels would return to normal. “It is not intended to be a permanent staffing increase, and I’m calling it a ‘surge’ for that reason,” he said.

**-More-**

## **Ballot proposal/ADD ONE**

The estimated cost of adding 150 new police officers would be \$81.7 million over five years, and that total cost is the amount that would be included on the November general election ballot if the measure is approved. Alderman Witkowski said the cost would be \$17 million less except that “one state law allows voters to increase spending, while another one penalizes them for doing it.”

For city property owners, the total cost on their tax bill for the surge is estimated to be approximately 47 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value each year from 2017 to 2021, or \$70.50 on a home assessed at \$150,000, Alderman Witkowski said.

Since 2004 the City of Milwaukee has been under a state-imposed tax levy freeze, and the only way to increase the budget under state law is through a referendum, Alderman Witkowski said. To reach the funding amount needed to hire 150 police officers through the city budget process for just one year, the equivalent of three branches of the Milwaukee Public Library would need to be closed, it would require the equivalent of closing the Municipal Court and the Department of City Development, as well as the elimination of half of the operations of the Milwaukee Health Department, he said.

“Very simply, obtaining funding for additional new police officers is not possible under current state law without the public saying ‘yes,’” Alderman Witkowski said.

“Under state law, the language on the ballot question will not be specific, essentially stating ‘We want to increase taxes,’ but then not adequately explaining to the public why,” he said. “We will need a significant public information campaign to make sure voters know exactly what the measure is for and what their vote will mean.”

The cost per newly hired officer, under the proposal, includes salary and benefits, as well as spending to recruit, train, equip and supervise each officer.

Monday’s Judiciary and Legislation Committee meeting **will be televised live** on the City Channel (Channel 25 on Time Warner Cable and on AT&T U-Verse Channel 99) in the City of Milwaukee. It can also be viewed via streaming video on the city website at [www.city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25).