



February 8, 2017

Ald. Cavalier Johnson
(414) 286-3777

Council urges Legislature to introduce fair property tax assessment policy bill

The full Common Council approved a measure yesterday (**Tuesday, February 7**) urging the Wisconsin State Legislature to pass legislation preventing a property tax assessment practice that favors big-box retailers.

The resolution -- authored by **Alderman Cavalier Johnson** and co-sponsored by **Aldermen Terry L. Witkowski and Michael J. Murphy** -- calls for state legislation to eliminate unfair tax benefits to large retailers whose stores' values are assessed based on the sales of similarly sized but vacant stores in abandoned locations and in different market segments. This method of property valuation shifts more of the property tax burden to small retailers and homeowners, Alderman Johnson said.

"We have been seeing a carefully-orchestrated wave of hundreds of lawsuits in Wisconsin forcing assessors to slash the market values of thriving national retail stores, unfairly shifting tax burdens to local mom-and-pop businesses and homeowners," he said.

"Homeowners in Wisconsin already pay 70% of the total statewide property tax levy, and that disproportionate burden is about to get much worse unless the State Legislature addresses tax avoidance strategies that national chains and big-box retailers like Walgreens, CVS, Target, and Lowe's are using across the country to gain dramatic reductions in their property tax bills at the expense of homeowners and other taxpayers," Alderman Johnson said.

Under the state legislation supported by the Common Council, municipal assessors using the comparable-sales method of valuation would be required to base property values on sales of comparable stores.

The city's Intergovernmental Relations Division is expected to be working on the issue with state legislators in Madison this year.