

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **CHAIR**

- Public Safety

### **MEMBER**

- Public Works
- Steering and Rules
- Anti-Graffiti Policy



**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**

ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

# **Time to create new local sales tax for public safety**

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan**

**May 10, 2017**

Something has got to change!

I love Milwaukee and it pains me to see what's happening to more and more neighborhoods. But my job as an elected official is to be upfront with my constituents and to tell it like it is.

So here I go...

It's true that no politician wants to champion an increase in taxes, but I am compelled to do just that because of the dire public safety circumstances the City of Milwaukee is faced with.

I am calling for the creation of a half-cent sales tax in Milwaukee – solely dedicated to funding public safety. I believe \$40 million could be raised annually by the sales tax to fund additional police officers, firefighters and vital resources to help bolster our public safety. I believe that money would go a long way in closing the gap and making our city safer.

For someone buying a \$2 cup of coffee, it would mean paying an additional cent for that purchase.

The repeated decreases in officer staffing in the ranks of the Milwaukee Police Department, coupled with major increases in certain crimes (car-jacking, car thefts, armed robberies, etc.) have led to many neighborhoods in Milwaukee losing control and becoming much less safe.

I could go down the list and talk about prostitution, drug dealing, and reckless driving, as well. These crimes are no longer under control in many neighborhoods, because of a lack of officers. The police presence is simply no longer there, or at a reduced level that fails to deter many people from committing certain crimes.

-More-

City Hall Room 205 • 200 East Wells Street • Milwaukee, WI 53202

**PHONE** (414) 286-3533

**FAX** (414) 286-3456

**E-MAIL** [rdonov@milwaukee.gov](mailto:rdonov@milwaukee.gov)

**WEBSITE** [www.milwaukee.gov/district8](http://www.milwaukee.gov/district8)



Again, I will say that the police staffing shortage we face is not the only problem we have that is related to our justice system. But, I believe police officers play a vital role in providing order and stability in our neighborhoods.

I believe we simply must have a serious conversation about how we pay for public safety in Milwaukee. We need to weigh the pros and cons, and I am fully aware that all of the questions won't be answered in this statement.

We also need to change the ongoing narrative between the city and the state when it comes to crime and public safety. It seems too often the city points the finger at the Governor and Legislature, and then the finger is pointed right back at the city by the Governor and state lawmakers.

In a related piece of news, I understand that the mayor will meet with the Governor today to go over the city's finances. I really hope the subject of a half-cent sales tax for public safety comes up during those discussions.

It is high time to end the gridlock (between the city and state), because the people suffering the most are our constituents.

Last, a sales tax increase dedicated to public safety just makes sense: Milwaukee is a major tourist destination drawing visitors year-round to museums, events and festivals, concerts, and professional sporting events – just to name a few. Visitors from the suburbs and from other states enjoy the protection of our police and fire services while they are here, and it is time that we capture or recoup something from them (in the form of the half-cent sales tax) for those services.

We owe it to our constituents to have this important public policy discussion begin today.

-30-