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CAVALIER JOHNSON
ALDERMAN, 2ND DISTRICT

Residents losing faith in state's commitment to local government, local concerns

Statement of Alderman Cavalier Johnson September 4, 2019

At the beginning of the August recess I called to check in with one of the most reliable Block Watch captains in my district just to see if there were any pressing issues to be addressed before the Council session resumed in September.

We had an hour-long conversation and it revolved around him and others like him losing hope.

They are losing hope because when they report nuisance properties in their neighborhoods the time for rectifying those issues is now longer because of a recent law enacted in Madison (Wisconsin Act 317). They are losing hope because they know that an already overwhelmed Police Department cannot address the fireworks that explode overhead late into the night and year after year with no action from Madison. In fact, we just heard fireworks exploding on the northwest side of Milwaukee over the Labor Day weekend.

Adding to this injury, years ago state shared revenue covered the entirety of the cost of policing and other matters but now the return doesn't even cover the Milwaukee Police budget. They are losing hope because they are tired of property owners being the ones that have to bear the burden of funding everything — especially when the freeways are packed with people coming into and leaving from Milwaukee for work every day and our city being Wisconsin's number one tourist destination.

They are losing hope because they are tired of dangerous reckless driving that makes them feel like prisoners in their own neighborhoods when there are enforcement tools available that for years, Madison hasn't allowed us to even test. They are losing hope because they are tired of gun shots popping off and hurting everyone from children to people just going to their local store and Madison only offering lip service to the trauma and pain that comes afterward. To this point, just recently a State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections employee was killed after a minor traffic accident. They're losing hope because while they are encouraged by the renaissance happening downtown (including the coming Democratic National Convention) they know that the tax proceeds from the estimated \$200 million economic impact will go to Madison and won't be returned to address issues in Milwaukee's neighborhoods like fixing our streets, repairing our street lights, or paying down debt.

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They're losing hope because they know that one of the very best crime prevention strategies that make our neighborhoods safer is access to family supporting jobs, yet Madison continues to fail in allowing for regional transit to take hold in metropolitan Milwaukee — even though the concentration of job seekers reside in Milwaukee and many family-supporting jobs lie beyond the boundaries of our city and county. By the time that you read this statement the JobLines bus program shuttling nearly one thousand people to work in Waukesha and Washington counties will have been discontinued, too.

The more time that we spoke, a disturbing pattern began to emerge. The current leadership in Madison is holding local governments back from delivering quality services and preserving quality of life for constituents at the local level. It isn't new but that doesn't make it any less frustrating because the people representing gerrymandered districts and holding firm control of both houses of our state legislature are wholly out of reach to my constituents.

I pride myself on the work that I do. I pride myself on making myself available to my constituents with regular district meetings, monthly in-district office hours, regular email correspondence with residents, regular newsletters, contact via social media and, continuous door knocking on the northwest side of our city.

It's frustrating to know that for all of the efforts that we put forward on the local level, our constituents -- who by the way are residents of Wisconsin too -- are losing faith in large part due to factors outside of our control and factors that seem to not even matter to leaders in the capitol.

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