

Statement of Ald. Jim Bohl

October 2, 2007

Continued pronouncements of boosts in Milwaukee police officer strength need to be more than just a headline grabber.

The fact of the matter is that continued delays in the start of police recruit classes and a reduction in the number of recruit candidates who actually enroll in and complete the classes is helping to fuel our officer shortage. If anything the article in Sunday's *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* demonstrated two things – (1) the system for putting officers in court to testify and other areas of the job must be better managed, and (2) that an increased number of officer vacancies should be filled and this should reduce the need for excessive overtime funding while helping to reduce officer fatigue and burnout.

I want to be clear that the issue shouldn't be just about adding additional police officers. First and foremost, the department needs to continue to find better ways to more efficiently maximize officer strength -- to put more of our existing officers on the street and ensure we are using them correctly. For their part, I'm hopeful that the D.A. and our court system realize the urgency for coming up with an improved case management system so our officers aren't sitting in a courthouse hallway waiting to testify when they could be out on the street protecting citizens.

On top of that we need to recognize that the unwillingness to close the gap on vacancies shows that we can either pay on the front end or the city will surely pay on the back end -- and likely with greater costs and negative effects. Our taxpaying citizens pay a lot of money for public safety in this city. It's high time that the policy makers figure out a way to get them their money's worth.

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