



December 22, 2008

Ald. Bob Donovan
(414) 708-2096

Alderman Donovan: "All I Want for Christmas is an Appointed MPS Board"

A loud "hallelujah!" rang out Sunday morning in the home of **Ald. Bob Donovan** shortly after the 8th District alderman eyed the editorial in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

The headline was **"Restructuring Needed -- MPS is at a critical juncture with a widening achievement gap and a dysfunctional School Board. A change in governance to an appointed board is needed."**

"I literally did a double-take and rubbed my eyes to make sure I wasn't seeing things," he said. "Then I started to think my Christmas wish for real change at MPS might actually come true."

Among the nuggets and recommendations found in the editorial:

- It is time to remove the current elected "dysfunctional" School Board and *appoint* a new one.
- A scathing critique of the MPS Board's handling of the Charlene Hardin "travelgate" case, under what it calls the "paralyzed leadership of President Peter Blewett."
- A rundown of the district's achievement gap – much attributed to the problems with governance and mediocre leadership.
- Dissolve the board, appoint a new one and then consider whether the current district, at about 80,000 students, is too large to be effectively managed.

-More-

An MPS Christmas Wish/ADD ONE

Alderman Donovan, who for years has made similar calls for major changes at MPS, said it's "about time" the newspaper issued a "reality-based opinion." "I applaud the editorial board for doing the right thing, and now Milwaukee residents need to keep the pressure on the mayor to actually act and make the changes happen, especially with a new, appointed board."

The editorial cited how the city of Boston has made huge leaps in school achievement with an appointed school board, and how similar improvements have been made in Cleveland, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia, where the switch to appointed school boards has been made. "To me (improvements and gains made under appointed boards) shows that the problems lie with bloated bureaucracy and poor governance that keep real improvements from happening in the classroom," Alderman Donovan said.

Will the mayor step up and reform MPS, starting with disbanding the current board and appointing a new one?

"That remains to be seen," the alderman said.

"Sadly, this mayor and this administration can't seem to make up its mind on what to do, and so we continue to drift," he said.

"He (mayor) is decisive only in indecision. He's determined to waver, and resolved to be irresolute," he said.

With the results of an audit of MPS operations expected soon after the first of the year – and the stinging reminder on property tax bills of the MPS 14% tax increase for 2009 – perhaps the timing is right for major changes at MPS, Alderman Donovan said.

"The clock is ticking Mr. Mayor," he said.