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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Tony Zielinski
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Council Initiative Would Boost City's Role In Fight Against Global Warming

*Membership Sought in Global Initiative That Seeks Sustainability, Reduction in
Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

If cities and other local and regional governments join together, they can have a dramatic effect on reducing greenhouse gas emissions – the main culprit scientists point to for giving the earth 19 of the 20 warmest years on record since 1980.

It is that approach and spirit that has led Ald. Tony Zielinski to draft a proposal that would make the City of Milwaukee a full member of a global coalition of cities and local governments offering to make major changes in the way they operate in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to adopt more environmentally friendly practices. The resolution, introduced at yesterday's Common Council meeting, would provide authorization and funding for the city to become a member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI – pronounced ICK-LEE). The organization officially goes by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.

Ald. Zielinski, a strong supporter of environmentally friendly (also referred to as “green”) initiatives, said the scientific evidence showing the clear links between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming “make it incumbent upon the city” to join the broader global efforts of local governments to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions. “As leaders it is our responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of our citizens and our city as a whole,” the alderman said.

“I believe joining this organization will not only help us contribute to making Milwaukee a healthier and more environmentally friendly city, it will also put Milwaukee on record as making a commitment to the global effort to slow or stop global warming,” he said.

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Council Global Warming Initiative/ADD ONE

Time is of the essence, Ald. Zielinski said, because in 2007 participation in ICLEI programming will be limited to full ICLEI members, and local governments that are not members may not participate in ICLEI programs or receive any ICLEI benefits or services.

If the resolution authorizing the city to join ICLEI is approved, the city would conduct a “milestones” planning process that would include a local air pollution emissions inventory and forecast of greenhouse gas emissions, as well as adopting an emissions reduction target and “action plan” to achieve the target. In addition, the resolution would put the city on record as endorsing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, a global warming reduction/elimination initiative approved as amended in 2005 by the U.S. Conference of Mayors and endorsed by 238 mayors, including those from Greenfield, Racine, Madison, Ashland, West Allis, Wauwatosa, La Crosse and Washburn.

Ald. Zielinski said the city’s ICLEI membership would link it to 475 other members worldwide representing 300 million people. Some member benefits in ICLEI include access to Internet tools and resources on sustainable development, training for elected officials, assistance in finding funding sources, and networking opportunities at regional, national and international events. Also, once communities join as members of ICLEI they are able to join ICLEI initiatives and receive support from ICLEI support services, he said.