



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 10, 2014

Contact: Rep. Josh Zepnick
608-266-1707

Rep. Zepnick Opposes MMAC Idea to Force Referendums Raising Taxes.

MADISON - State Representative Josh Zepnick (D-Milwaukee) Today, Milwaukee State Representative Josh Zepnick said the latest MMAC proposal to force referendums to raise taxes in Milwaukee is a disaster waiting to happen and "proves my point since speaking out publicly about building a new Arena for the Bucks: Milwaukee's business leaders are tone deaf and flat out do not get it."

Speaking on Oct 7th at the Rotary Club, MMAC President Tim Sheehy suggested that Milwaukee county taxpayers pay 500% more in taxes than wealthier Waukesha to help pay for things like an Arena, the Zoo, the Museum and Performing Arts Center.

"Despite the fact that all the suburban counties have already gone on record at the County Board level, to oppose raising taxes for the MMAC plan, and Milwaukee County is about to vote on a similar measure this month, business leaders continue to hit up taxpayers with more lousy ideas."

Zepnick pointed out in an August memo to various stakeholders involved in the new Arena project as well as the Wisconsin Center: where has the business community been the last five years which have wreaked havoc on Milwaukee's tax base and stretched families to the edge of financial death?!

"If the business community was genuine, show me where they stepped up to the plate when Milwaukee schools faced funding cuts which went to an expanded, private voucher system. Where has MMAC been on helping Milwaukee upgrade its transportation network?"

They stopped on the tracks: high speed rail, expanded METRA service, and the Downtown Streetcar, either through clumsy advocacy or being totally quiet while the State Capitol went on a tirade against Milwaukee County. Lifting residency requirements in the city of Milwaukee, declining shared revenue, punitive levy limits and other Madison knows best budget policies, standing silent while we said goodbye to hundreds of millions of Federal dollars for health care and infrastructure needs during a horrible recession...the list of unfair costs to Milwaukee taxpayers combined with missed opportunities to grow the economy is so long it's absurd."

Having said that, Zepnick noted that the Legislature is not exactly filled with people interested in raising taxes whether in Milwaukee or elsewhere. And, why should Milwaukee County taxpayers bear the burden to help pay for these so-called regional amenities? If suburban folks are so eager to help pay for things in Milwaukee, they seem to have missed the calls over many years when it comes to fair budgeting, win-win economic development, or regional approaches to schools, transportation, or heck, the availability of clean water.

Let the private sector and wealthy shift their donations from voucher schools and the Republican political machine (which I believe preaches no taxes and less government spending...ahem), and instead use that private money to help boost the cultural destinations that need "taxpayer bailout" like the Museum, Zoo or PAC.

Help to rapidly expand the Convention Center, improve bus and rail transit, and step on gas pedal to boost hotel and housing development of all price ranges from the Pabst complex/Park East, to the Milwaukee River, and south towards the useless Grand avenue mall and over to Marquette's campus and the Valley East.

Let market forces do their job: entertainment venues, restaurants and bars, retail and other small business growth will follow with better infrastructure and more housing. No subsidies needed.

And importantly, the mass of more people and more spending Downtown will ultimately prove helpful to those cultural institutions in need of "taxpayer bailout:" Arena, Museums, PAC, et al.

"I hope that the public will get more answers prior to Election Day on these important issues."

###

7 NORTH, STATE CAPITOL, P.O. BOX 8953, MADISON, WI 53708 ♦ (608) 266-1707
FAX: (608) 282-3609 ♦ TOLL-FREE: 1-888-534-0009 ♦ EMAIL: Rep.Zepnick@legis.state.wi.us