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6/15/2017

A Public Safety Funding Shell Game: MKE Mayor's Actions Speak Louder than Words

Milwaukee has a crime problem, so Milwaukee is responding by cutting the ranks of police and fire protection. Does this make any logical sense? Of course not. Sadly, and similarly, as schools utilize a tactic by threatening to cut extracurricular sports in an attempt to strong-arm taxpayers, the Milwaukee mayor is threatening residents with a reduction in protective services while once again pointing the finger of blame at the pearly dome of the statehouse 75 miles to the west. While the mayor continues to deflect the ills of his city on the Republican controlled legislature and conservative East Wing, Republicans have been throwing solutions right back at him – mandatory sentencing, tougher penalties for carjackings, HOPE (Heroin, Opioid, Prevention & Education) legislation, and longer incarcerations for serious juvenile offenders. The state has answered the call, but yet, once again, we learn that the “buck stops here” plaque is absent in the mayor’s office. Let me address this issue in brief. The city has millions of dollars for a streetcar, but no money for adequate police protection? Mayor Barrett claims that the state is the culprit. As one who represents nearly 58,000 constituents and taxpayers, I will respond. For the second consecutive session I have introduced Assembly Bill 107, as well as submitted a budget motion, to prevent the state’s transportation coffers from funneling additional future funds to the streetcar’s *operational* costs. State taxpayers have already contributed generously to the streetcar’s *construction* with over \$69 million in federal handouts; and yet, the city continues to quietly locate funds for the streetcar by “robbing Peter to pay Paul” through the use of Tax Incremental Districts (TID) funds. So, once again, we have responded by tacking an amendment onto our budget motion and bill to prevent a community from utilizing a Tax Incremental District (TID) for the project costs of a streetcar. My solution for the residents of the City of Milwaukee? Hold your local elected officials accountable. Tell them to stop blaming the state, to use the public safety ideas and reforms Republican are offering, take responsibility for the safety of their residents and redirect your hard earned tax dollars back to the public safety and the services the residents of the city desperately need.

Respectfully,

Rep. Jesse Kremer

Wisconsin State Assembly District 59