

Rep. Crowley: Milwaukee Caucus to JFC on shared revenue

Posted on Thursday, Mar 23, 2017

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

Contact:
(608) 266-5580

MADISON, WI – Members of the Milwaukee Caucus sent the following letter today to members of the Joint Finance Committee asking that the State of Wisconsin reevaluate shared revenue to accurately reflect the growing costs of local municipalities.

Dear Senator Darling, Representative Nygren, and members of the Joint Finance Committee,

The undersigned members of the Wisconsin State Legislature's Milwaukee Delegation formally request that the State of Wisconsin increase the amount of shared revenue being sent to the City of Milwaukee and other local governments around the State.

We are concerned that shared revenue has not increased for local municipalities while costs continue to rise. Public safety expenditures consume the largest part of municipal budgets and are being driven up by wage settlements and increasing costs to fund pensions and health benefits. Revenue collections cannot keep pace – especially since levy limits rise more slowly than wage increases. This has created a situation where it is increasingly unsustainable to maintain the staffing levels of police and fire departments.

For example, the City of Milwaukee's Police Department budget is now higher than the collected city's total property tax levy. At the same time, Milwaukee's economy is growing which has contributed to rising income and sales tax revenues for State

government. We are requesting that shared revenue be reevaluated to fairly and accurately reflect the growing costs of such essential services and to better reflect the contributions local governments make to our State's economic development.

If current trends continue, the Milwaukee Police Department's cost-to-continue budget is projected to have increasing deficits for the next five years. In 2018, the total police cost is projected to increase \$9.2 million from 2017 while levy limits will only allow for a \$3.9 million increase citywide. Compounding this, the shared revenue payment remains fixed at \$219 million. The Police and Fire Departments cannot be sustained at this rate without an increase in shared revenue or some other new revenue stream.

Milwaukee's Police and Fire Departments provide indispensable services to our community. Unfortunately, shared revenue has not increased as the needs of the community have. The City of Milwaukee is being forced to decide between fully equipping these departments and vastly reducing other city services like libraries and road maintenance. Putting Milwaukee's public safety at risk with a tenuous financial picture is a no-win situation for any of us. Not for the city or the state. We urge you to work with us to find a solution.