

Coalition for a People's Sheriff: Responds to Schmidt budget request

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Coalition Releases First Statement Following August Primary

MILWAUKEE--As the County Executive kicks off Budget Open Houses throughout the county, the Coalition for a People's Sheriff issues the following statement in response to outgoing Sheriff Richard Schmidt's 2019 Budget Request:

On August 14th, Earnell Lucas was overwhelmingly chosen by Milwaukee voters, ousting Interim Sheriff Richard Schmidt. Now, the Milwaukee County Executive must, in the best interests of the residents of Milwaukee County, determine the budget of the sheriff's department, as overseen by its exiting administration.

"We, the Coalition for a People's Sheriff, believe that a county's budget reveals its priorities and that our elected officials inherit and work in the parameters of those priorities," said Ryeshia Farmer, organizer for the Coalition for a People's Sheriff. "Last month, the people of Milwaukee County voted, overwhelmingly, for an administration that would introduce a revitalized and people-oriented style of leadership to the sheriff's department. Now, County Executive Chris Abele has the opportunity to demonstrate that he sees the will of the voters as a priority, and he can do that by enacting a budget that meets the accountability, transparency, and best practices not seen under Sheriff David Clarke."

Specifically, the coalition seeks to understand why Schmidt's budget request indicates that staffing costs and overtime costs are rising simultaneously. In addition, we wonder why the administrative expenditures are skyrocketing from \$855,003 in 2016, to \$593,808 in 2017, \$1,911,326 in 2018 and finally requesting

\$2,800,468 for the 2019 budget? Lastly, we want to know what the causes of turnover in the sheriff's department are, if those causes are related to forced overtime labor, and if the office's turnover is leading to higher costs.

Additionally, the coalition highlights the following issues:

- **Body Cameras:** We are at a decision point for body cameras in the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department. As the trial program is set to end next year, we strongly recommend that this program be expanded to every division in the department and made permanent.
- **Training:** Recent events have shown just how necessary it is to train sheriff's deputies on proper procedure and on the department's jurisdiction. Regarding the training components of Sheriff Schmidt's budget request, how much on-the-job training do new deputies receive? What determines if a long-term deputy is qualified to provide that on the job training, and how much of the budget goes toward that? Also, what falls under "on-the-job training"?
- **Racial Profiling:** Given past practices of racial profiling and recent events involving the Sheriff's office, how are the saturation patrols prioritized and carried out. Also, how is the sheriff's department ensuring against racial and other profiling?
- **Mental Healthcare for Incarcerated Persons:** The budget mentions that four captains will be assigned to the County Jail as wellness coordinators in order to improve service to inmates with mental health needs. What are their qualifications on mental health? Do they have qualifications regarding mental healthcare specifically for marginalized individuals?

"We urge the County Executive to attain answers to these questions, and to fight for a budget in line with the wishes of the people of Milwaukee — increased training and an end to racial profiling, body cameras for law enforcement, increased mental health and healthcare for incarcerated people, and spending that prioritizes true public safety and wellness for all," said Ryeshia Farmer, organizer for the Coalition for a People's Sheriff.