

Milwaukee Ald. Murphy: Bill usurps authority of Milwaukee citizens and could bring financial hardship to taxpayers

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Two Racine area state legislators (Rep. Robin Vos and Sen. Van Wanggaard) have joined a Washington County legislator (Rep. Janel Brandtjen) in proposing Assembly Bill 606/Senate Bill 512 that increases state control of the City of Milwaukee's Fire and Police Commission, injects politics into a non-partisan body, and adds significant costs to local taxpayers.

The Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission is the oldest civilian-run, independent law enforcement oversight board in the nation. Assembly Bill 606 would eliminate this local control over community issues, instead preferring major political parties, union officials, and individuals from suburban communities to make decisions on the City of Milwaukee's policies and budget.

The legislation was introduced in late October and now heads to the Assembly floor for a vote tomorrow in Madison.

This legislation reverses the 2007 law change that cut off pay of Milwaukee officers discharged and facing criminal charges for the same misconduct. Requiring the city to pay officers who are dismissed and face criminal charges will impose substantial

costs on Milwaukee taxpayers, roughly \$1 million annually. The practice of paying dismissed MPD officers and alleged perpetrators of horrific crimes ceased in 2007 after the officers involved in the Frank Jude beating were paid \$3 million in today's money. Taxpayers demanded an end to this practice, and a bipartisan solution was passed. This change in law by representatives from communities outside of Milwaukee is an astounding waste of tax payer dollars.

If the legislation passes, Milwaukee will be the only city in the state required to fund the pay and fringe benefits of discharged officers while they undergo disciplinary processes.

Further, this bill unacceptably politicizes our public safety, providing political parties and unions substantial control in choosing the members of this citizen commission. The City of Milwaukee would be required to pick from a limited list of candidates provided by the police and firefighter unions for two positions. The current law protects a century's old, core tenet of the Fire and Police Commission to be a non-political entity. Instead, the Mayor will be required to make appointments from candidates submitted by the Republican and Democratic parties rather than choosing the most qualified candidates.

While I support having FPC appointees with police and fire fighting experience, it is interesting the City of Racine and City of Menomonee Falls' version of the FPC requires NO fire or police appointees. This shows the sheer hypocrisy of the legislation. The political winds will someday change, and it will be interesting to see if residents of Racine and Menomonee Falls prefer City of Milwaukee residents sitting on their commissions, making decisions that impact their taxes.

I hope the citizens of Menomonee Falls or Racine are aware their representatives prefer state control over local issues, and are okay with abandoning the long held Wisconsin principle of government by informed local control when they see fit. If suburban legislators are given the ability to dictate massive tax increases to city taxpayers via this change in law, I think there's a phrase for that: Taxation without representation.

I will continue to speak out against this poorly crafted piece of legislation, and I strongly encourage Milwaukeeans to do the same.