

Milwaukee Alderman Murphy: GOP lawmakers again embrace anti-Milwaukee stance with BID measure

Posted on Friday, Mar 16, 2018

>> **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.](#)**

Statement of Alderman Michael J. Murphy

I read with great interest the article “Why does Milwaukee have so many business improvement districts?” in last week’s Shepherd Express.

The piece greatly details the huge success of Business Improvement Districts in Milwaukee and how they have helped to transform many commercial areas across our city. The 1984 state legislation authorizing BIDs opened up a creative new way for communities across Wisconsin to fund commercial district improvements and increase sales, safety and customer activity.

But special interests have swooped in to put a damper on the BID success – but only here in Milwaukee.

The article points out how (following a lobbying effort by special interests) tucked into the most recent state budget was a provision that, for some BIDs, severely limits their funding sources. GOP Sen. Alberta Darling and GOP Rep. John Nygren offered Budget Motion 418 and point eight of the motion reads, “if a first class city (Milwaukee) specially assesses a mixed-use property located in a business improvement district (BID), that is real property and is partly tax-exempt or residential, or both, the special assessment may be imposed only on the percentage of the real property that is not tax-exempt or residential.”

Interestingly, similar legislation was brought forth three years ago but would have affected ALL communities in the state. Major pushback killed that legislation.

This time it was a line item inserted into the budget in an underhanded manner with little fanfare, and 10 minutes of discussion. But it will hit ONLY Milwaukee BIDs hard.

Officials who oversee BIDs in areas such as the Third Ward, Brady Street and Kinnickinnic Avenue said they expect a “double digit percentage” effect on the assessable property base. That equates to huge reductions in the money they have available and in what BIDs can accomplish with improvements. It’s not good news for Milwaukee business corridors.

This is excellent reporting and again shows how suburban and northwoods GOP legislators have few qualms with going out of their way to please special interests at the expense of Milwaukee and its residents and businesses.