

Milwaukee County Supervisor Rolland: Calls for focus on creating jobs and driving racial wealth equity

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WAUWATOSA – As the Milwaukee County Board and other government bodies meet to discuss their 2021 budgets, Supervisor Shawn Rolland (District 6) is calling for the community to prioritize job creation, economic development and racial equity. Milwaukee County currently [ranks 71st out of 72 counties in health outcomes](#), according to the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's 2020 County Health Rankings. Numerous prestigious medical journals have [articulated the link between people's wealth and health](#). In fact, a [2016 study by Raj Chetty, PhD, of Stanford University](#), "found a gap in life expectancy of about 15 years for men and 10 years for women when comparing the most affluent 1% of individuals with the poorest 1%."

"Families are hurting in this COVID-19 environment: our metro Milwaukee area has 62,000 fewer jobs than it did a year ago and that economic impact takes a toll on our health," says Sup. Rolland. "It's critical to prioritize saving jobs, creating good jobs and closing the racial wealth gap that's defined our county for too long. Milwaukee County has a strategic plan and a vision to be the healthiest county in Wisconsin. The link between people's wealth and health are undeniable – closing the racial wealth gap will close the racial health gap faster."

The economic impact of COVID-19 on Milwaukee County has been massive. In August 2020, there were 62,600 fewer jobs than were in August 2019 in the metro area, according to the [Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce \(MMAC\)](#). Out of 515 major metro American cities, the City of Milwaukee currently ranks 456th

in jobs growth, 437th in population growth and 418th in the growth of new businesses.

Before the pandemic began, Milwaukee County's economy was lagging other areas of the state. [According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#), between 2007 and 2018, Milwaukee County's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased just 1.5%. During that same period:

- Dane County grew 34%
- The WOW counties (Waukesha, Ozaukee and Washington) grew 14.2%
- Wisconsin's overall economy grew 12.6%

While the metro area's relatively stagnant economy affects everyone, and limits the ability of local governments to generate revenue to maintain and grow constituent services, its impact alongside the legacy of systemic racism in our economic and political systems continues to negatively affect people of color. Inequitable access to good-paying jobs, affordable housing, education and health care, inequitable hiring and promotion practices, imbalances in policing and criminal justice have all contributed to the racial health and wealth gap.

A July 2020 report entitled "[The State of Black Milwaukee in National Perspective: Racial Inequality in the Nation's 50 Largest Metropolitan Areas](#)" by UW-Milwaukee Professor Emeritus Mark Levine found that:

- Just over 60% of Black men in Milwaukee County between the ages of 25 and 54 were employed in 2018, compared with more than 90% for white males.
- White high school dropouts post a higher employment rate than Black high school graduates in Milwaukee.
- The Black poverty rate in Milwaukee—33.4%—is the highest among the nation's largest metropolitan areas, and almost five times the White rate.
- The average income for a Black household in Milwaukee in 2018 was just under \$30,000, compared with close to \$80,000 for whites that same year, the biggest racial disparity in the country.
- Black median household income in Milwaukee, adjusted for inflation, has declined by an astonishing 30% since 1979.
- About 40% of Black households in Milwaukee are living in concentrated poverty

and earning at or under \$10,000 annually in income, compared with 7.3% for white households.

- 13.1% of Black households that earn more than \$100,000 in annual income are still living in concentrated poverty.

A [report by the Corporation for Economic Development and the Institute for Policy Studies suggests](#) that it will take 228 years for Black families in America to accumulate the same amount of wealth as whites. Closing the racial wealth gap would help the U.S. increase its GDP by 4 to 6% over the next decade, [according to a McKinsey & Company report](#).

On the Milwaukee County Board, Supervisor Rolland represents neighborhoods in Wauwatosa, West Allis and Milwaukee's westside.

About the Milwaukee County Budget Public Hearing Process

County Board Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson announced today that Board of Supervisors will hold its official public hearing on the 2021 budget on Friday, October 30, at 4:00 p.m. In the interest of public health, this year's hearing will be held online. The public is encouraged to register in advance at County.Milwaukee.gov/CountyBoard if they want to speak during the public hearing. Public comment is limited to 2 minutes per person. The annual budget hearing is an opportunity for the public to speak directly to their County Supervisor about the County budget. Supervisors will consider amendments to the County Executive's budget on Oct. 26, 27, 29, and Nov. 4, before adopting a final budget on Nov. 9.