

Supervisor Ortiz-Velez: Reflects on County Board service

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Supervisor Sylvia Ortiz-Velez released the following statement ahead of her departure from the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors:

“On April 18, I complete my second and final term as Milwaukee County Supervisor for District 12. While I am bittersweet about leaving the board, I am immensely proud of the work my colleagues and I have done to create a better community for all our residents.

“Despite the challenge of legislating during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have accomplished some tremendous things over the past two years. I led the effort to decriminalize marijuana use and possession, reducing the fine in Milwaukee County to \$1. Removing obscene financial penalties for the use and possession of marijuana is a matter of equity, especially for Milwaukee’s Black and Brown residents who are disproportionately fined and incarcerated for marijuana-related offenses.

“In 2021, I passed a resolution demonstrating the county’s strong support for legalizing fentanyl testing strips, a life-saving resource that was classified as drug paraphernalia for many years. Working with first-responders, community leaders, and state officials, we succeeded, and Governor Evers signed a bill legalizing testing strips. Milwaukee County has already begun to distribute strips throughout the community, delivering on a years-long effort to protect our Milwaukee community from fentanyl overdose.

“From community safety to community representation, I have always had the best interest of Milwaukee’s Latino residents in mind. During Milwaukee County’s redistricting process last year, I fought hard to ensure that the county’s new

legislative map included two majority-Latino districts. In this, we succeeded. For the next decade, the South Side Latino community can rest assured that their voices will not be diluted, ignored, or overpowered on the County Board.

“This past February, the Board of Supervisors approved my resolution requesting the federal Department of Justice review Wisconsin’s inequitable shared revenue system. Under this system and the funding formulas the state uses, our county pays out far more than it receives in return. Milwaukee is the economic engine of this state and it’s time for the state legislature to treat us as such. This is a matter of equity to ensure that we can adequately fund all vital Milwaukee County services, programs, and departments.

“My efforts to uplift a sustainable solution to restore our beloved Mitchell Park Domes have laid the groundwork for future action by the board. I implore my colleagues to prioritize the restoration of the Domes, not just for the Clarke Square and Silver City neighborhoods, but for all who visit this inimitable Milwaukee County landmark.

“My friends, as I leave this office next week, I look back fondly and proudly on the good work that I have accomplished. I also look ahead to Milwaukee County’s many challenges and opportunities in the coming years. As I continue my service as State Representative for District 8, I am committed to being a proactive, collaborative partner with my colleagues at the county.

“I extend my congratulations and best wishes to District 12’s incoming supervisor, Juan Miguel Martinez, as well as to another new, Latino member of the Board, Dyango Zerpa. Thank you to staff, colleagues, my community, and my family who have all contributed mightily to my success and efforts on Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors. Most of all, thank you District 12!”

Supervisor Ortiz-Velez was first elected in 2018. She represents several neighborhoods on the south side of the City of Milwaukee, including Clarke Square, Mitchell Park and Walker’s Point.