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Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Policy Forum Analysis of County Executive's 2014 Budget Highlights Abele's Micromanagement of Sheriff's Office

Milwaukee, WI – The Public Policy Forum (PPF), an independent research organization, recently released a study of County Executive Abele's 2014 proposed budget for Milwaukee County. In the section on public safety, the PPF examined the attempt by Abele to micromanage the Office of Sheriff.

Given the sheriff's status as an independently elected constitutional officer, however, there is a high bar to clear when it comes to making substantial cuts that could impact his office's service-level capacity. In the end policy makers need to consider whether reductions imposed by the recommended budget conflict with the sheriff's ability to effectively carry out his mandated services and duties.

Consequently, policy makers need to consider whether the number of corrections officers provided in the recommended budget will be sufficient to meet the needs of the actual Jail population, or whether there is a budgeting mismatch of staff- to- inmate population. Also it should be noted that while the sheriff does have flexibility to shift resources to the Jail from other areas of his operation (and vice versa) proposed cuts to most of those areas in this and previous years' budgets will eliminate his ability to do so.

County Supervisors now must attempt to sort out the arguments of both sides and address any programmatic consequences to sheriff's operations that are deemed unacceptable. As suggested above, their goal should be to consider the duties that must be performed by the sheriff per the state constitution and the statutes, and to ensure the flexibility to manage his budget in a manner that allows those duties to be appropriately fulfilled. In that regard, perhaps a preferable approach for this year would be to consider a "lump sum" reduction to the sheriff's budget, as that would afford him greater flexibility to deploy staff and otherwise manage his reduction as he sees fit.

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This analysis by an independent research firm confirms my claim that Abele's budget reductions are nothing more than an attempt to run the office of sheriff contrary to state law and the state constitution, Clarke said. I have 35 years of law enforcement experience, Abele has zero. Not only does he not have the authority, he has not at any juncture consulted with me in this process. This isn't a budget, it is a political statement about the disdain he has for the Office of Sheriff and the deputies who perform the duties.

Clarke reiterated that "this is how budget deficits occur and how the public is harmed." At the same time that Abele harms public safety he proposes that the taxpayers pay an additional \$400,000 for a personal security staff. Clarke calls this an exercise in self-infatuation. Former County Executive Tom Ament spent only \$78,000 per year for his security staff.

In a hearing before the County Board's Finance Committee, Clarke asked the County Board to repair the damage that Abele's document will inflict on public safety and the people of Milwaukee County.

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