



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
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Second Vice Chairman

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Abele Targets Suburban Homeowners to Pay for Bucks Arena

Under a proposal being advanced through the state legislature by County Executive Chris Abele, some Milwaukee County suburban homeowners could have their property tax payments diverted to offset the county's payments for the Bucks arena.

"Here we go again," said Milwaukee County Supervisor Steve F. Taylor of Franklin. "Garnishing suburban residents' wages to pay for the Bucks arena was a bad idea the first time the County Executive proposed it. Nothing has changed."

Assembly Bill 885 and Senate Bill 735 would automatically subject suburban homeowners who are behind on their property tax payments by just 90 days – the equivalent of one installment payment – to a 15 percent surcharge, and the more aggressive collection tactics of the state, including wage garnishments, tax intercepts, and liens. Mayor Tom Barrett refused to sign off on a similar arrangement for City of Milwaukee taxpayers during arena negotiations in July. City homeowners would not participate in the program under the bill negotiated by Abele, either.

"This is just one more example of the County Executive's pathetic negotiation skills," said Taylor. "Except this time, the County Executive was hoodwinked into condemning suburban homeowners in order to spare city taxpayers. Last I checked, Abele was obligated to serve all county residents, not just a select few."

The bills were introduced about a week ago without input from the County's Comptroller, Treasurer, or Clerk of Courts, the officials currently charged with overseeing the county's debt. As a result, all three elected officials provided testimony in opposition to the bill at a recent Assembly Committee hearing.

"First Abele goes to the state legislature to create the Comptroller as an independent elected office," explained Taylor. "Now he's gone back to the legislature to take away the duties of the Comptroller. If the bills weren't so ill-conceived, I would say the County Executive's behavior was comical."

According to a June, 2015 report by the County Treasurer, approximately 1,450 suburban properties would be immediately affected. Although the bill allows the County to defer entering into an agreement with the state until December, 2016, homeowners in all 18 of Milwaukee's suburban municipalities will be impacted once the bill takes effect.

"First Abele commits the county to \$80 million for a Bucks arena, now he's asking our suburban residents to shoulder the cost," lamented Taylor. "This County Executive is tone deaf to the needs of our residents, but even worse, he's been derelict in his service to them."

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