

Dear constituents of the 16th district,

As the year comes to a close, I wanted to take this time to wish you and your family the best this holiday season.

The past year has been one of success and failure for Milwaukee County, but I feel that we are on the right track and will continue to see improvement in the long-term.

The budget for 2007 has been completed and the 16th district will see some improvements, throughout the Park system and in the district, swimming pools will be open with new hours and lower fees. The changing rooms at McCarty Park are scheduled for renovation, along with other improvements at Jackson Park.

Countywide public safety was a major expenditure in the 2007 budget with \$5 million added to the tax levy for Courts, District Attorney and the Sheriff's Department. Testimony at the Finance and Audit Committee budget hearing by the Sheriff, District Attorney and Chief Judge made it clear these funds were desperately needed.

The social safety net that exists in Milwaukee County continues to be stretched to the limit and will need to be redesigned to meet the needs of our community in the coming years. The small additions in the 2007 budget will only be sufficient for the short-term. Major issues like mental health and economic support continue to challenge Milwaukee County and will require assistance from other local and state officials.

Milwaukee County is at a turning point and over the next year setting priorities that reflect our community values will need to be done.

No one likes to see property taxes increased and I will continue to develop cost saving measures that will deliver high quality services at a reasonable cost to constituents.

As residents of Milwaukee County, we are not just individual consumers of a particular service. We all are citizens with community responsibilities and taxes are an investment in that community. The quality of life in Milwaukee County should not be sacrificed for individual short-term political ambitions.

The property tax system throughout the state of Wisconsin needs to be overhauled and a 21st century system put in its place, one that truly reflects a persons ability to pay and benefits received.

The property tax issue is not just a local level problem but is an outgrowth of decisions made

in the state capitol, such as how much funding should be returned to local communities (Shared Revenue) and what level of service is required by the state (Mandated Services). I will continue to develop a long-term solution to this problem and move forward on the issue.

Over the past few years you have heard a lot about Milwaukee County employee benefits, here is an outline of where we stand to date and what I have done:

2002 to 2004

- Initiated Attorney General's investigation into pension scandal.
- Implemented changes that required future wage and pension changes to have independent, detailed, and long-range financial impact statement.
- Proposed changes in the membership and appointment process of the pension board.
- Placed retirees on the pension board.

2005 to 2006

- As a member of the personnel committee, we have settled contracts with seven (7) of our eight (8) labor unions.
- All settled labor contracts include changes to pension backdrop and sick leave provisions.

Retiree profile

- 86% of all Milwaukee County retirees receive a pension less than \$30,000 a year.
- Average Milwaukee County retiree pension \$17,600 a year.
- Milwaukee County retiree average years of service 26.1 years.

I believe with continued hard work and honest labor negotiations we will develop a fair and reasonable wage and benefit package for all county employees.

Health care cost for you and Milwaukee County as an organization have increased dramatically over the past five to ten years. The effect on our community has been devastating; increases by the health care industry should be seen as tax increases because that is the ultimate effect they have on our economy. The ability of all local governments to address this issue is limited; the state government is the only authority that has the ability to make the needed changes to the health care system.

The future of Milwaukee County is filled with many opportunities for success and I know our community of dedicated citizens are committed to improving the quality of life in Milwaukee County, through a process of respect and open discussion we will find the best solutions.

Best Wishes,



John F. Weishan Jr.