

Statement of Common Council President Willie L. Hines, Jr. October 2, 2007

Time to Fight Crime – and Overtime Abuse

More police officers, less crime. Or so the saying goes. Increasing the number of officers is believed to be the standard solution for solving crime. The members of the Common Council hear this same, simple strategy annually. Like the leaves changing color and children returning to school, every fall MPD asks for more police officers.

But the City of Milwaukee has suffered because there is one thing MPD holds even dearer than more officers: more overtime pay.

In June, the City Comptroller published an audit that I requested, analyzing the amount of overtime pay that MPD officers receive in comparison with other cities. The audit noted that managerial oversight is severely lacking within MPD and abuse of overtime pay has become commonplace. Several recommendations were made by the Comptroller in order to address the problem and significantly save our tax dollars.

Now, on Sunday, September 30, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* has published an investigative report revealing that 380 additional officers could be patrolling our neighborhoods if overtime pay was brought under control. At the very least, our 200 officer vacancies could easily be filled if the MPD budget was not gutted by overtime.

I do agree that we need more officers on our streets, and I believe that fixing MPD overtime will pave the way for making more officers a reality. The time has come for our police department to make a difficult decision; Chief Hegerty and her successor must choose between more officers and excessive overtime pay.

In this upcoming city budget, I will seek to cap overtime, so that we can add additional officers. I will also work to ensure that overtime pay is linked to actual crime fighting. I will push to directly link overtime dollars to the findings that were proposed by the Comptroller's overtime audit.

Managerial oversight is desperately needed on the part of our current and future police chiefs. Overtime pay is available for unforeseen circumstances, not everyday procedures. Utilizing our police overtime dollars more wisely, while securing more officers in the process, is a no-brainer. The citizens of Milwaukee deserve better.

Finally, I must emphasize that being financially responsible is not the same as being soft on crime. I want criminals to be punished and locked up as much as anyone. I will work to get more officers on the streets, so that the criminal element that plagues our community can be locked up. At the same time, spending our taxpayer dollars irresponsibly can also be considered criminal. Let's bolster our police force while being fiscally responsible.

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