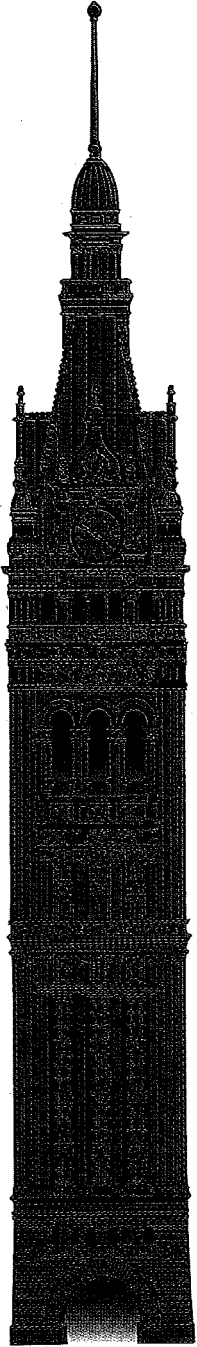


John O. Norquist

Mayor

City of Milwaukee

October 18, 2001



The Honorable
Common Council of the
City of Milwaukee
City Hall, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Honorable Members of the Common Council:

I am returning unsigned Council File Number 010772, a resolution seeking state legislation to alter the method by which members are appointed to the Fire and Police Commission.

I have reviewed the debate of the proposed legislation that took place during October's Public Safety Committee, the Judiciary and Legislation Committee and finally at the Common Council meeting of October 12, 2001. The concerns expressed by aldermen regarding the responsiveness of the Police Department and the accountability of Police Chief Arthur Jones are matters that I take very seriously. However, this action will not address those issues, and will only further dilute and complicate the process by which Chief Jones and his department are held accountable to the citizens of Milwaukee.

The Fire and Police Commission was established in 1885 by the citizens of Wisconsin, institutionalizing the concept of civilian oversight of the Police Department. This was the first Fire and Police Commission law enacted in the United States, and is viewed as a model around the country of sound public policy because it requires that civilian Police and Fire Commissioners respond directly to the citizens they serve. It continues to serve us well.

Our current state law was carefully designed to create a balance of power on fire and police issues, leaving final authority to this group of citizen appointees. The Common Council and the Mayor's Office share the power and responsibility of appointing members in the current system. The aldermen have been full partners in the process by which current members of the board came to their positions. I urge you to take the confirmation process seriously. By meeting with the Fire and Police Commissioners, and/or attending the biweekly Fire and Police Commission meetings, you are able to bring issues and concerns directly to them, and to hold them accountable to you and your constituents.

Your resolution proposes that the state radically change the balance of power and remove the checks and balances that protect the integrity of the Commission.

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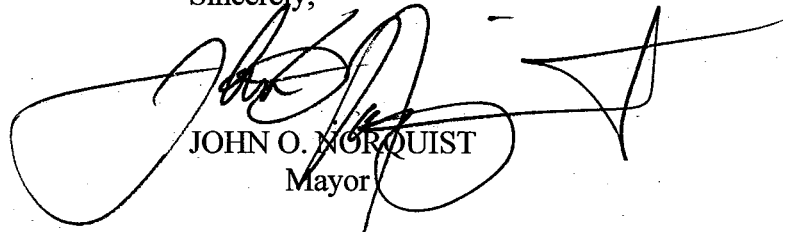
Having two members appointed by the Common Council President with no review or check by the executive branch of this government upsets a long and honored City of Milwaukee institution. Not only that, it goes against the system established by the founders of the U.S. government balancing power between legislative and executive bodies of government.

Reducing crime and improving police responsiveness are goals that are important for us to work together to accomplish. I believe we can more effectively address accountability issues locally than in the partisan atmosphere of Wisconsin's legislature. This file moves these issues out of the realm of local control, and may have consequences that the aldermen who sponsored this resolution don't intend and may regret.

Asking the State Legislature to fix something for Milwaukee that is not broken will do nothing but prolong reaching a solution about the real issue here: crime in Milwaukee. This is a difficult problem that requires us to work together to achieve results and I am willing to meet with any of you who are interested in finding solutions.

This legislation is not in the best interests of the City and its people.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John O. Norquist', is written over the typed name and title. The signature is fluid and somewhat abstract, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JOHN O. NORQUIST
Mayor