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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Jim Bohl
Ald. Bob Donovan
Ald. Joe Dudzik
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Mayor Chose School Funding Over Shared Revenue; City Taxpayers & Services Will Pay The Price, Aldermen Say

Council Members React to Mayor's Choice in State Budget Discussions

“Multiple sources” have indicated that Mayor Tom Barrett decided school funding – not shared revenue – was his top priority when asked by Governor Jim Doyle which item he wanted most in the newly approved state budget, Ald. Jim Bohl said today.

The scenario has infuriated Ald. Bohl and others who say the loss of millions in shared revenue will translate into city budget cuts to key services such as police and fire protection, while also increasing the burden on city taxpayers.

“It’s disingenuous for the mayor to publicly point a finger at the Republican members of the state Legislature and blame them solely for the shared revenue loss,” said Ald. Bohl.

“By no means do I believe Republican legislators were out to do shared revenue any favors, but that this mayor would absolve himself, Governor Doyle and the Milwaukee state delegation of their part in abandoning the shared revenue program in the budget compromise is creative fiction,” said Ald. Bohl.

“Not only am I disappointed by the abandonment of the shared revenue increase by Milwaukee elected officials and so-called friends, but they then went so far as to try to move the target off their own backs so they wouldn’t get blamed for it,” he said.

“Whose side are these people on?” Ald. Bohl asked.

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Shared Revenue “Vetoed” By Mayor/ADD ONE

Approved last week after months of wrangling between state Democrats and Republicans, the \$57 billion state budget includes zero new funding for shared revenue, a critical source of money the city could use to fund initiatives and help reduce property taxes. Several items in Mayor Barrett’s proposed 2008 budget hinge on an increase in shared revenue, including putting additional police officers in Milwaukee Public Schools and an effort to continue the Neighborhood Safety Initiative.

Ald. Bob Donovan, chair of the Common Council’s Public Safety Committee, said he can’t believe the mayor would knowingly throw cold water on public safety initiatives “that are critical in the city at this time.”

“The mayor never passes up the opportunity to tell us that public safety is his number one priority, but perhaps education is now at the top of the list,” said Ald Donovan, adding, “perhaps he’s no longer sure of his top priority.”

Ald. Joe Dudzik, a member of the Council’s Finance and Personnel Committee who represents the 11th Aldermanic District on the city’s south side, said he can’t hide his displeasure. “I’m surprised and disappointed in the mayor’s tact,” he said.

The 2007-2009 state budget includes \$10 million for Milwaukee Public Schools.

But the zero shared revenue also means the mayor’s proposed levy increase of 3.3% is virtually unattainable, and puts increased pressure on the Common Council to find cuts in services, raise the levy beyond this or both.

The Legislature’s budget initially set the levy limits at 2% with a built-in growth formula. Recent action by the Governor through a line-item veto would allow in an upward change in the levy cap to reach 3.86% if not overridden by the Legislature.