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Murphy asking good questions about sex offender program

By Ernst-Ulrich Franzen for the Journal Sentinel Editorial Board
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Concerned about the high concentration of sex offenders the state has placed in the city of Milwaukee, Common Council President Michael Murphy is asking some reasonable questions of the state.

The system does seem to be placing an unfair burden on Milwaukee, and Murphy deserves better answers than he's received so far.

Based on the state's data, of the 2,399 state registered sex offenders living in Milwaukee County as of Feb. 20, 2,138 — 89% — lived in the city of Milwaukee, the Journal Sentinel reported. Fourteen of the county's 19 municipalities have ordinances that restrict sex offender residency.

When Murphy contacted the director of the state program, he was told to contact state and local elected officials to change the laws. In other words, "Not my problem."

Murphy said he had three concerns with the director's response:

"As the director overseeing a program that is obviously broken, what role will you and your office be playing to fix and resolve the glaring problems that exist?"

"Is your office actively working to correct the problems? If so, what steps are you taking and how can I help provide greater insight from Milwaukee's perspective?"

"If 'protecting the public is a priority' for your office, does that mean we will be waiting 16 years for the fix to the obvious sex offender placement problem (as was the case for the broken sex offender database)?"

Murphy also said the governor could show good faith and concern for city residents by issuing an executive order. And he vowed that the Common Council would act by passing a new ordinance restricting placement of sex offenders in the city.

Good for Murphy. Although Milwaukee will inevitably have more offenders, the system does seem to be out of balance. Milwaukee should not have to bear an unfair share of this burden.

What about it, governor? Isn't this worth your attention?

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