

June 10, 2002

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 to you unsigned Common Council File 011730 that endorses the creation of a "We Want Work (W-3): Emergency Public Service Jobs Program". This program would create 500 new jobs, each valued at approximately \$35,000, including benefits. I appreciate the Council's willingness to use its bully pulpit to address issues of unemployment and poverty, but I believe enactment of this legislation is problematic because it proposes a limited and expensive short-term fix for a problem that requires long-term structural change.

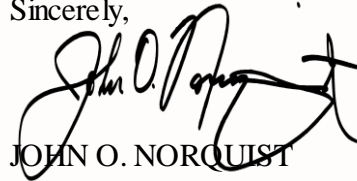
The UWM Employment and Training Institute recently documented that there are 26,371 unemployed individuals in Milwaukee as of October 2001. This represents 3.4 unemployed individuals for every available full-time job. Creating 500 public service jobs which will employ less than 2% of the unemployed workers in Milwaukee is not a good use of city resources. City efforts are better spent on advocating for structural changes which will provide access to new, private sector jobs, new employment and training opportunities and expanded benefits for low-wage workers. Our limited and valuable city resources should instead be spent on:

- Creating a strong business climate by keeping taxes low and providing efficient and effective city services.
- Continuing to champion expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Spearheading an effort to expand BadgerCare to non-custodial parents and other childless adults.
- Reducing crime so businesses can grow and thrive in all Milwaukee neighborhoods.

- Working with W2 agencies to utilize TANF dollars to extend wage-paying community service jobs as a transition to work for all eligible individuals and not just W2 participants.
- Broadening our partnership with Milwaukee County to better utilize the \$30 million dollars received annually by the Private Industry Council for employment and training initiatives, and ensure that city residents have the job skills needed to be competitive in the quickly evolving regional labor market.

Together, these policies could provide a much more comprehensive plan to help Milwaukee's unemployed and low-income residents during these tougher times. I plan on calling upon you to move forward with me on supporting and implementing these items in the coming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John O. Norquist". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "N".

JOHN O. NORQUIST
Mayor

JM:pjm