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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Terry Witkowski
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Consolidation Question Won't Go To Milwaukee Voters ---- Yet

*Deadline to Include Referendum on November 7 Ballot Missed, But Ald. Terry
Witkowski Says Too Early to Eulogize the Issue*

It's clear now that City of Milwaukee voters won't get the opportunity in six weeks to weigh in on a possible study of consolidating city and county government operations, but the topic is now in the public realm and could come back for a ballot measure in 2008, Ald. Terry L. Witkowski said today.

"The referendum for November is not moving forward, but the consolidation issue is definitely not dead in my book," said Ald. Witkowski, who drafted a Common Council resolution seeking an advisory referendum on the November ballot that would have allowed city voters the chance to weigh in on the topic.

"Nine out of 10 residents I spoke to on this issue said they wholeheartedly support studying how consolidating county government functions might work, and I don't see that sentiment going away anytime soon," the alderman said.

To have been included on the fall general election ballot on November 7, the referendum resolution needed Common Council passage and approval by September 22. However, the measure failed to get scheduled before the Council's Judiciary and Legislation Committee, and no special Council meeting was called on the matter, thus effectively killing the issue for now. Ald. Witkowski said the next opportunity to get the issue before city voters would be during the spring general election in April 2008.

-More-

Consolidation Ballot Question Shelved/ADD ONE

Ald. Witkowski's resolution sought an advisory referendum that would have allowed voters to indicate whether a study of consolidation of Milwaukee County government services under the City of Milwaukee – thus dissolving county government – should go forward.

Ald. Witkowski said he believes consolidation of county services “may not be incompatible” with a state study of Milwaukee County government operations and a recently released report from the Greater Milwaukee Committee that suggested the possibility of the state taking over some functions of Milwaukee County government.

During a recent public hearing on the topic – held on the city's northwest side – citizens asked for more information on consolidation and how it would work, Ald. Witkowski said. “They were clearly saying ‘we need to know more, so please give (the public) more information and research results’ before moving forward with the referendum,” he said.

The wording of the proposed referendum question was:

“Shall the City of Milwaukee, with assistance from other units of government and other interested organizations, study the feasibility and potential cost savings of the city assuming responsibility for government functions currently performed by Milwaukee County and, if such a consolidation of functions is feasible and financially beneficial, work with the State of Wisconsin and other municipalities in Milwaukee County to dissolve the county and create a consolidated city/county form of government?”

The consolidation of city and county services and functions has been successfully implemented in major U.S. cities, including Indianapolis, Louisville and Nashville, and Ald. Witkowski has said the savings that could result from dissolution of Milwaukee County and consolidation of services under the City of Milwaukee could help address metropolitan Milwaukee's image as a high-tax area, an image he said which hurts the city's ability to retain and attract businesses and residents.