

December 3, 2020

City of Milwaukee Common Council
Public Safety and Health Committee
200 E. Wells Street, Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Committee Members:

I am the retired Executive Director of Legal Action of Wisconsin; the largest Wisconsin law firm serving traditionally marginalized and poor communities. I strongly support Leon Todd's appointment to lead the Fire and Police Commission. I participated in the hiring of Lee at Legal Action, when he decided to leave private practice at Foley & Lardner and pursue his passion for social justice. Lee worked for Legal Action for approximately five years as a strong advocate for low-income clients. During that time, he left his mark as an effective legal analyst, good writer, and a strong litigator. His work included both standard eviction cases, complex issues in federal court, and the application of government regulations to state law. He understands that government organizations must follow existing regulatory frameworks.

Lee left Legal Action for the Public Defender Appellate Division as I assumed my role as Executive Director for Legal Action (I retired in July, 2019). I acted quickly to appoint him to Legal Action's board of directors because of his legal skills and personal qualities. I felt that he would be a strong advocate on the board for our low-income clients. I know from his time at Legal Action that he has the highest ethical standards, and he is smart and thoughtful as well. I also saw first-hand that he has the perfect temperament needed for the challenges at the Fire and Police Commission. Lee is thoughtful and slow to anger. At the same time, he is not intimidated by histrionics and the background noise sometimes present in complex organizations. Instead, he digs down to the heart of an issue, clarifying as he goes until he finds and can present solutions. Behind his unassuming personality is a strong will, and the ability to find the correct result.

The Fire and Police Commission and the Milwaukee Police Department have seen their fair share of controversy and turmoil recently, and balancing the diverse interests of public safety, equal treatment and social justice is a very complex task. Both institutions need strong, stable, and thoughtful leadership. Lee will be an integral part of new leadership that advances a community vision that is safe and fair for everyone. I think he understands the sometimes disparate interests that must be brought together and balanced in order to succeed. Lee has the ability to bring together all parts of the community, make sure everyone is heard, build collaborative relationships and then fashion workable solutions. His style fosters the teamwork that is critical to the Fire and Police Commission's success. From his work, Lee understands the challenges faced by diverse communities.

Leon Todd is a great choice for the Fire and Police Commission. He cares about every member of the community. I hope you confirm his appointment.

Sincerely,

David Pifer
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