

Milwaukee alderman asks state to review sex offender placement rules

By Don Walker of the Journal Sentinel
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Common Council President Michael Murphy, unhappy with the response he received from the head of the state's sex offender program about the number of sex offenders living in Milwaukee, has asked Gov. Scott Walker to stop the placement of additional offenders until a more equitable system is found.

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. Fourteen of the county's 19 municipalities have ordinances that restrict sex offender residency.

In response, Grace Roberts, who directs the sex offender program, suggested to Murphy that he contact state and local elected officials to change the laws.

"I very much appreciate Ms. Roberts' 'Civics 101' recommendation to talk to my elected representatives, but my response to her is threefold," Murphy said in a statement.

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

Walker was not available for comment.

"It is clear to me that inaction by the State of Wisconsin, and the DOC specifically, indicates that it does not fully appreciate the negative impacts on the health, safety and welfare of Milwaukee residents that could result from the continued concentration of sex offenders residing in the City of Milwaukee," Murphy said.

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