

First of all, let me say I am optimistic about Milwaukee County's future. The vetoes I cast are not because I'm battling the County Board. I am battling against the reality that Milwaukee County finds itself in a fight to keep businesses and families from leaving because our taxes are too high. And while I have great hopes for this County, I know those hopes cannot be realized if we give in to the notion that we need to raise more money through taxes to drive economic development. I believe quite the opposite, we need to take less.

Look at what's at stake with the MillerCoors merger. Do we really believe that more taxes create the best economic climate possible to influence that decision? And what about the American Bowling Congress, will tax increases push them over the edge?

Someday, I would love to see commercials that invite businesses to Milwaukee because Milwaukee is good for business. But we can't send out those kinds of messages if some keep raising taxes. Milwaukee shouldn't be in the position of having to ask corporations to stay. But we are.

My priorities for the county are the same as my priorities for the budget: I hope to restore safety, affordability and pride.

Safety.

I am grateful that the County Board returned a budget that retains the majority of public safety improvements I made for the coming year. It is essential that we work with each community to provide the inspiration, tools and resources to help them help themselves.

If we do not feel safe, we have no hope for the future. This budget helps provide hope.

Affordability.

The reaction of taxpayers at the MPS budget meeting should remind us that most people in Milwaukee County feel we already pay too much to the government. *My budget action actually provides a slight decrease in the property tax levy. With the cost of everything else going up, government should be finding ways to give residents a break, not add to their tax burden.*

Milwaukee is adding more residents. That's a good sign. So is the fact that last year, we saw more than \$1.1 billion in new construction throughout Milwaukee County. To further that growth – and to make the case for businesses like Miller to stay here – we must hold the line on taxes, which will lower their cost of doing business in our region.

Pride.

Controlling the tax burden can be done while continuing to provide core services – the kinds of services that make us proud to live in Milwaukee County. Our budget provides these services in new and innovative ways.

Parks: My budget found a way to add 20,000 more hours of labor to maintain and improve our parks. We propose paying for work to be done when people actually use the parks.

Also, improvements for next year include beginning work on a new aquatics center at Lincoln Park, installing new playground equipment, improving our parkways, building new splash pads and upgrading trails and areas along the lakefront.

Our budget also maintains funding for the cultural institutions and provides improvements at the zoo.

Transportation: Our budget maintains all of our transit routes. It includes no increase in the cost of ParaTransit rides or in the costs for frequent users of the bus system.

In September, the airport, which was recently ranked as 4th best in the country, broke the monthly record for passengers. Our improvements are working.

And this budget includes major investments to improve county roadways and bridges and a number of parkways.

Human Services: Finally, our budget includes major support for those in need in our community. These items include:

- Continuation of senior centers and senior meal programs.
- Long-term care needs for older adults continue to be met under FamilyCare.
- Expanding the benefits of FamilyCare to those under 60 with developmental or physical disabilities.
- Major improvements in staffing and resources for mental health services.
- A new initiative to address the housing needs of those with mental illness.
- Managed care coverage for those with no source of healthcare.
- New childcare fraud unit to protect children.

The budget passed by the County Board is good because it includes the majority of the strong initiatives that I included in my original budget to make this county safe, affordable and a place we can brag about. But the budget can't serve two masters. It must serve the people, not the government. My vetoes restore this budget to one we can all afford.