

2009 Budget Address (DRAFT)

Last spring, I ran on a bold agenda to improve public safety and protect core services – all without adding to the burden our taxpayers. I am proud to say that this budget fulfills that aggressive agenda by transforming our government today so that it can sustain these services into the future.

When I first arrived, our government was nearly bankrupt. Today, while we still have significant challenges, our county is headed in the right direction.

Since 2002, our debt is down 25% and our workforce decreased 23%. These changes, along with reforms throughout our government, led to the national improving the status of our bond rating to positive. And last year, we finished with a \$X million surplus. This was a great team effort and it shows that we are making real progress.

During same six years in state government, their bond rating went down, debt went up XX% and the target of cutting 10,000 jobs in eight years fell 75% short. And today, Wisconsin has the largest GAAP deficit in the country. While the state government failed to address its serious problems, we worked together to get our financial house in order – and we are winning.

To continue our positive trend, this budget transforms the way we deliver services so we can sustain these programs far into the future.

All while protecting our taxpayers with the 7th straight budget that does not raise the property tax levy from the previous year.

We make bold changes that transform the way we protect the public in this budget.

I propose that all of the corrections functions in the county be consolidated under the authority of the Sheriff. I propose a new system of universal screening that puts all criminal justice agencies on the same screening process. I propose – with the help of our Attorney General – continuing the new program to protect witnesses so that are not intimidated to keep from testifying against serious criminals.

We make bold changes that transform the way we care for those in need in this budget.

I propose that we eliminate the waiting lists for services for people with disabilities. In this budget, I propose that we move forward with expanding FamilyCare to people under the age of 60 with developmental and physical disabilities. And we continue to expand the number of older adults who are enrolled in the current FamilyCare program.

I also propose consolidating agencies to improve support for children and families. I push for the move to a state-of-the-art mental health complex and a new funding source

to sustain mental health services for years to come. And I propose new incentives for ParaTransit eligible individuals to use the bus system without an economic burden.

We make bold changes that transform the way we provide quality of life programs to the public in this budget.

I propose that we increase the hours of work in the parks, improve the value of summer pool passes, open a new aquatic center in Lincoln Park and improve our assets through updated bathrooms and playgrounds. I also want to create more dog parks and permanently re-open Bradford Beach.

This budget continues to improve our attractions at the zoo and maintains our commitment to the museum, war memorial and other cultural assets.

We make bold changes that transform how we use transportation in this budget.

I propose that all of our current budget routes remain intact for 2009 and looking ahead to the future, I propose that we move forward with a Bus Rapid Transit plan that will improve and upgrade our current bus system.

On top of that, I propose that we put in place a process to prepare for a bid on the operations of our airport. Mitchell International is very well run. In fact, we saw XX months of record breaking growth this past year. That is exactly what makes our airport attractive to potential bidders.

If successful, contracting out operations would provide a steady revenue stream to support and improve transit in our county and in our region for years to come. And it would do it without raising another tax. The City of Chicago is doing it even as I speak. We should move forward with a plan to see if it can work in Milwaukee.

I also propose a budget that aggressively improves our roads, highways and parkways.

We make bold changes in how we run government in this budget so we can maintain core services while we protect the taxpayers.

In this budget, I propose contracting out \$XXXXX worth of programs and services. So far, we already have plenty of success in partnering with groups in the community for things like FamilyCare - which is drawing national attention for the quality of our care.

This budget does not “outsource” but “insources” jobs as we keep the jobs in our county – just not always with county employees. From getting more help for people in need by having Impact do our call centers to adding XXX more hours of labor in the parks by shifting from year-round to seasonal employees, I propose that we transform our workforce to sustain our services – without injuring our taxpayers.

This budget turns to private contracts to maintain core services while keeping jobs within the county, but not within the government. These decisions lead to long-term sustainability for the county.

These changes in the use of workforce and resources – along with major reorganization of government structure – leads to transforming budget. This is a budget that does more with less and prepares a way to sustain services into the future.

Friday, August 22, 2008