

People all across our county are scared about losing their jobs, paying the bills and the mortgage, and being able to provide for their families. This is not the time for government to add more worry by raising taxes.

That's why I'm vetoing portions of the 2010 budget that were approved by the County Board last Monday.

It's critical we hold the line on taxes so we can keep people and jobs in Milwaukee County – and the only way to do this is by making tough choices in our county budget the same way you are doing with your own budgets.

In September, I presented my 2010 budget and asked the County Board to work with me to craft a budget that doesn't raise taxes, that reins in government spending, and that lowers our debt without cutting essential services.

One solution is to contract out for services like housekeeping (like most companies and even the City of Milwaukee). Another solution mirrors successful security measures taken at places like the federal courthouse and Reuss Plaza downtown. Contracting with private firms does not compromise safety.

We also asked for a better balance between the benefits received by public and private sector employees, so that we all share the burden of this economy together. Just like families have done by scaling back, and companies have done to cut spending when profits are sluggish, we've asked for contributions by our county employees that are more in line with what the taxpayers in the private sector contribute.

The County Board has reviewed and amended my proposal, but has yet to heed my call for zero increase in the property tax levy and my solutions to rein in government and rein in spending. Instead of looking at some long-term solutions to balance the county budget, 10 of the 19 Supervisors voted to raise your taxes.

The good news is you still have time today to let your voices be heard and make a difference. County taxpayers are closer than ever to getting a budget that puts the needs of Milwaukee citizens above the needs of government.

Still, I am encouraged to see how energized and involved taxpayers have been throughout this year's budget process. Milwaukee County residents have taken to the phones and taken to the streets to send their elected officials a message. Over a thousand citizens attended rallies at Serb Hall and the Italian Community Center to show their support for our zero tax increase budget. Last week, the county switchboard was flooded with calls from concerned citizens who said, "enough is enough" when it came to yet another wheel tax and they helped kill it.

Milwaukee citizens have made it perfectly clear that their elected officials will be held accountable for their decisions when it comes to raising taxes, but we can't stop now. We must keep up the fight to put families first.

With this in mind, I have fulfilled the promise I made eight years ago by vetoing any tax increase on residents and employers here in Milwaukee County. I am taking this action because I know how people are struggling in this economy.

And unlike the attacks made by some, my vetoes will not cut existing bus routes, pools in our parks or indigent burials. I know we can continue to provide the services we need without increasing the tax burden on families, seniors and employers.

We're almost there, but I need your help to bring this budget back to what I presented in September. Let's keep fighting for a zero increase budget that puts hardworking taxpayers first.