

Q. What is the difference between the Pension Obligation Bond plans done by the State of Wisconsin and MPS and the plan opponents call "risky" in our 2005 budget proposal?

A. We use Pension Obligation Bonds as part of an overall plan to lower the property tax levy. The state and MPS used it to fuel more government spending.

This must be the standard used by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* editorial board since they did not say a word about either the state or the MPS plans when both were completed last year. The hypocrisy is amazing. In fact, our proposal is considerably more conservative than the state plan yet they call our plan "risky" after failing to comment at all on the state plan.

While the reaction from some of the members of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors was unprecedented yesterday after my speech, I think that it is good. In 2002, a mighty force of people rose up and said that they were not going to take it anymore. The focus was the scandalous pension and sick leave plan pushed by Tom Ament and approved by the county board on November 2, 2000. Ironically, the majority of the supervisors who now attack our budget are the same ones who voted for this mess four years ago. Those benefits still haunt us today.

After my election and the election of a handful of new supervisors, some media pundits said that the public would lose interest in county government. Thanks to the election of supervisors this spring, I was able to get a no tax increase budget passed last fall.

Now, however, the members of the county board have four more years until they have to face the voters. Now, they feel empowered to ignore the wishes of the taxpayers and side with the special interest groups.

If they had waited until the end of October to announce their intentions to raise taxes by as much as \$20.5 million (which would be an 11% increase), we might not have enough time to mobilize the people of this county. Now, more than ever, people need to understand the two sides in this debate.

On one side is our budget that lowers the property tax levy for the third year in a row. We do so while still keeping all of our bus routes without raising fares. We do so while still maintaining support for our parks system and our zoo. We do so while still providing safety net health care for the poor. We do so by still providing assistance for people with disabilities and support for our seniors and veterans. In other words, we still do all of the things that I promised we would do during the last campaign while holding the line on taxes.

On the other side stands a county board that is ready to raise taxes to maximum amount allowed under state law. If they continued that trend over the next four years, the county portion of our tax bill would go from \$700 to over \$1,000 on an average home. Apparently they did not look at the census data from the past decade that shows that we're the only county to loose population or that we lost jobs in the late 1990s through early 2000s.

What would they get with such a big tax hike? They suggest that want to replace the jobs we eliminate in this budget - even though most are held vacant because of retirements. That means more of a burden on our future budgets because of those incredible fringe benefits. They suggest that they want to replace the Pension Obligation Bond plan that is more conservative than the one used by the state and the school district. They suggest that they don't want to budget for land sales that we've worked with the City of Wauwatosa on for nearly two years.

In other words, this is a debate between higher taxes and more spending versus our plan to cut taxes, lower spending and use all of our financial tools to balance the budget.

To win this debate, we need people to contact their county board supervisor at 278-4222 and let them know what we think about the budget. We can win if we awaken the people!