

TO: Chairman Lee Holloway
FR: County Executive Scott Walker
DT: Thursday, December 09, 2004
RE: Office of Intergovernmental Relations

After receiving notice of the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations meeting set for Monday, my office requested a copy of the proposed Milwaukee County Legislative package. As you can read in the details of the narrative, there are many areas of grave concern for county government as we prepare for the introduction and adoption of the 2005/2007 state budget.

Considering the recent decision to hire a staff member from a Senate Democrat's office, I assume that you are certain that connections to the administration and the Governor's Office will get all of our important initiatives into the Governor's budget document.

Considering that the Milwaukee County Office of Intergovernmental Relations has long had a reputation of being staffed by Democrats (in the eyes of most legislators, Kathy Kuhn was the one exception), it seems odd that at a time when the Republican majorities grew in the State Assembly and in the State Senate that office would hire a lobbyist who worked for a member of the party not in control of either chamber.

After hearing of the recent hiring decision, I asked a few of my former colleagues – including some who serve on the Joint Finance Committee – what they thought about the choice. Needless to say, they were less than enthusiastic.

One of the biggest issues for Milwaukee County last session was getting through payments for GAL costs in the court system. Until I personally contacted members of the Senate and Assembly, we did not even have an author for the bill. Again, a personal call from me got the bill scheduled in committee and through the process. The bill died in the final days of the Legislative session. It would be nice to have a representative of Milwaukee County during the next legislative session that – at least – has some positive interactions with the Legislative leadership.

We already see the negative impact that the state budget is likely to have on Milwaukee County services as we read the budget requests submitted to Governor Doyle and his Department of Administration. Cuts in child support enforcement and another freeze in Youth Aids while charges for detention go up 20% are just a few of our concerns.

Considering most of these concerns are going to come out of the Governor's budget proposal, it just seems odd that we would not bring someone on board who has a positive relationship with the leadership in the State Assembly and State Senate. I, and the members of my staff, do not have the time to lobby the members of the Legislature on every specific component of the state budget and we are concerned that this decision will have a negative impact on the legislative agenda of Milwaukee County.