

October 18, 2005

Don Weinberg
2609 Lefeber Avenue
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Don,

A young woman in her mid-thirties came to one of our budget briefings at the United Community Center. She lived near by in a duplex she bought for her and her three children and she rented out the other half. Interestingly, she was raised near the UCC as part of a family of 12 and she was the first one to purchase her own home.

At the budget briefing, Alma Linda Ramirez told me that she works at the 16th Street Health Clinic and that she works hard to keep her kids in school and to keep up her home. At the end of her comments, she pleaded with me not to raise property taxes beyond her ability to pay. She was afraid that she would not be able to stay in her home.

Earlier this year, there was a similar story in the Sunday edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. It spoke of families who received homes around 35th and Lisbon because of Habitat for Humanity and how some were not able to pay the property taxes on their new homes.

The reason I bring up these examples is to point out to you that my concern over property taxes is not for the rich. Most of the "rich" don't like, but really don't complain about property taxes. It is the senior citizens on fixed incomes like Social Security or the working families who are paying a mortgage who cannot afford big increases in property taxes. These are the people I hear each day.

Per your view on a campaign promise, I made that issue a key part of my election and re-election. It was not hidden in a response to a particular group. I said it at every forum, in my flyers, on my TV and radio ads and in each of my interviews. It has been a key part of every budget I put together and every budget speech I made to the public.

Per your comments about the poor, it would be good for you to actually look at our 2006 budget. Even with major cuts in state and federal aid, we maintain our core safety net and actually increase support in key areas.

Our FamilyCare program grows so that our older adults (particularly those who are poor) can get the type of long-term care they need. We support our on-site and home delivery meal programs and we improve our senior centers.

All of our programs for people with disabilities are maintained and we include additional funding to get people off of waiting lists. The amount of funding for AODA treatment goes up by \$7 million for each of the next three years because of work we did with the federal government.

In the juvenile justice system, we actually increase funding for programs that work to keep young offenders out of the state detention system. Since 2002, we cut the number of kids going into the state system in half through these programs.

The General Assistance Medical Program (GAMP) is supported in this budget (even though the paper implied that it would be cut). This is the payer source of last resort for health care for the poor in our community.

As for seeking to find jobs for the poor, I proposed using all of the county's proceeds from the sale of land in the Park East corridor for a CED (Community and Economic Development) fund. This fund will target areas of high unemployment for new development, job creation and affordable housing.

The other issue with economic development comes back to the business climate. Much like the views of retirees and working families in this county, our employers are looking for relief from the excessive tax burden. When I talk to CEOs who are looking to expand here or elsewhere in the country, tax burden and health care costs are a huge disadvantage for our region. To attract more jobs (which will help pull more people out of poverty), we need to address these key issues.

Not addressing the fundamental lack of jobs in our impoverished neighborhoods is like giving the poor fish without teaching them to fish for themselves.

Sincerely,

Scott Walker