



Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

Lee Holloway
Chairman of the Board

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For Immediate Release
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COUNTY BOARD APPROVES ADVISORY REFERENDUM ON TAX SHIFT PLAN

Referendum would give voters opportunity to weigh in on Transit, Parks, Paramedics funding

Milwaukee, WI – The Milwaukee County Board voted 12-6 to approve a resolution calling for an advisory referendum on whether to provide property tax relief by shifting funding for mass transit, parks, recreation, culture and paramedics from the property tax levy to a small increase in the sales tax.

“This referendum would let the public decide whether they want to reduce the property tax levy by \$65 million and take us back to the lowest levy we’ve seen since 1997,” said Chairman Lee Holloway. “Don’t be fooled when the County Executive claims property taxes wouldn’t go down. The property tax levy would still be subject to strict levy limits set by the State. For the owner of a \$150,000 home in Milwaukee, this would be about a \$165 property tax reduction.”

The referendum question would appear on the November 4, 2008 ballot. The yes or no question would read, “Shall the State of Wisconsin grant Milwaukee County the authority to provide property tax relief of at least sixty-seven million dollars (\$67 million) by levying a one percent county use and sales tax to be used to remove the following three items from the property tax levy: parks, recreation and culture; transit and emergency medical services (EMS)?”

“We approved this referendum in an attempt to shore up the local portion of mass transit funding in Milwaukee County,” said Supervisor Michael Mayo, Sr., Chairman of the Transportation, Public Works & Transit Committee. “We decided to let the voters weigh in after the lack of a dedicated funding for transit was identified as an urgent concern in a report issued by the Public Policy Forum last month.”

“This also gives residents the opportunity to prioritize funding for Parks, Recreation and Culture. Sales taxes are partly paid by visitors to Milwaukee County, who enjoy the County’s amenities but pay no property taxes,” said Supervisor Gerry Broderick, Chairman of the Parks, Energy & Environment Committee. “One-third of our sales tax collections come from people who live outside Milwaukee County.” Last month, the Milwaukee County Parks Advisory Commission voted unanimously to recommend a referendum to preserve parks funding while providing property tax relief.

Supervisor John F. Weishan, Jr., added, “It was also a priority to include emergency medical services and paramedics funding, which are major quality of life services important to my constituents.”

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