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6 **A RESOLUTION**

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8 In support of State Legislative changes that would permit Wisconsin county  
9 governments to generate an additional local option sales tax and reduce the reliance on  
10 property taxes through a binding referendum process

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13 WHEREAS, on November 4, 2008, Milwaukee County voters approved an  
14 advisory referendum that asked the following question:

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16 *Shall the State of Wisconsin grant Milwaukee County the authority to provide*  
17 *property tax relief of at least sixty-seven million dollars (\$67 million) by levying a*  
18 *one percent (1%) county sales and use tax to be used to remove the following*  
19 *three items from the property tax levy: parks, recreation and culture, transit and*  
20 *emergency medical services (EMS)?*

21  
22 ; and

23  
24 WHEREAS, a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* editorial on November 5, 2008, was  
25 headlined: *People Have Spoken: It's time to move forward on a Milwaukee County*  
26 *sales tax increase to protect parks, transit and other key services and to offer property*  
27 *tax relief; and*

28  
29 WHEREAS, despite the action by the voters, the State Legislature has not  
30 provided Milwaukee County and the authority to generate new revenue and reduce the  
31 reliance on property taxes through a binding referendum process; and

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33 WHEREAS, since the 2008 referendum, the State has enacted strict tax levy  
34 limits on local governments and, for most major state aids, not provided even  
35 inflationary increases; and

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37 WHEREAS, Wisconsin counties are limited primarily to the property tax and  
38 State shared revenue in the options to fund critical services and maintain public  
39 infrastructure, many of which are mandated by the state; and

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41 WHEREAS, on February 7, 2019, Milwaukee County adopted File No. 19-161,  
42 the recommendations of the Fair Deal for Milwaukee County Workgroup whose  
43 objectives were to identify viable solutions for Milwaukee County and local governments  
44 to work in partnership with the State of Wisconsin to deliver public services and  
45 programs; and

47 WHEREAS, one of the adopted recommendations of the Fair Deal for Milwaukee  
48 County Workgroup is to provide County government with additional options for local  
49 control over their own financial destiny, with new, additional revenue, and a reduction in  
50 the reliance on property taxes, through enabling legislation and a binding countywide  
51 referendum; and

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53 WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Governor included in his 2021-2023 Executive  
54 Budget, 2021 Senate Bill 111, a provision which enables counties and municipalities of  
55 a certain size to raise an additional sales and use tax subject to a successful binding  
56 referendum; and

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58 WHEREAS, since the inception of the Premier Resort Area Tax (PRAT) in the  
59 1990s, only two communities have met the statutory requirements while, unfairly for the  
60 remaining local governments, the Legislature carved out exceptions for the:

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- 62 • City of Bayfield (2003)
  - 63 • Village of Ephraim (2005)
  - 64 • City of Eagle River (2006)
  - 65 • Village of Stockholm (2014)
  - 66 • City of Rhinelander (2017)
  - 67 • Village of Sister Bay (2018)

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69 (map hereto attached to this file); and

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71 WHEREAS, in 2009 only four local governments had an active vehicle  
72 registration fee (VRF) to help pay for vital local transportation needs, in 2021 that  
73 number has grown to 42 local governments (maps hereto attached to this file); and

74  
75 WHEREAS, from 2006 to 2020, under State property tax levy limit restrictions,  
76 the peoples of 43 different localities passed referenda allowing their local governments  
77 to exceed the statutory property tax levy limits, some localities as many as three or four  
78 times (map hereto attached); and

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80 WHEREAS, it is readily apparent that the local government finance structure in  
81 the State of Wisconsin is unsustainable and local governments are statutorily being set  
82 up to fail; and

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84 WHEREAS, the Committee on Finance, at its meeting of June 17, 2021,  
85 recommended adoption of File No. 21-547 (vote 7-0); now, therefore,

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87 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby supports an opportunity to provide  
88 county governments with additional options for local control over their own financial  
89 destiny, with new, additional revenue from a local optional sales and use tax, and a  
90 reduction in the reliance on property taxes, through enabling legislation and a binding  
91 countywide referendum; and

92

93 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Office of Government Affairs staff are  
94 authorized and directed to provide this resolution to the Wisconsin Counties Association  
95 for consideration in its 2021 Legislative Platform.

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06/17/2021

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