



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DAVID CROWLEY

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Thursday, March 28, 2024

Honorable Members of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors:

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 59.17(6), I have vetoed *File Number 24-342*, a resolution “Requesting to Adjust Constitutional Officer Salaries of the Register of Deeds, County Treasurer and County Clerk in Accordance with Milwaukee County Ordinance Section 17.98 for the Next Eligible Terms.”

I do not object to increasing the annual salaries for Milwaukee County employees in an effort to align with current market trends. In fact, the County Board, including members of the Personnel Committee, have worked closely with the Milwaukee County Department of Human Resources on the largest compensation transformation in recent years. This represents a true collaborative effort that is resulting in fairer wages and benefits for all Milwaukee County employees.

In continuing this work, my administration is examining salary adjustments at every level throughout County government. That’s why at my direction, the Milwaukee County Department of Human Resources recommended an 11.5% base salary increase beginning in the next term for three Constitutional Officers: the Register of Deeds, the Treasurer, and the County Clerk. As with other salary recommendations within County government, the Department of Human Resources used its standard process of reviewing market data for similar positions, accounting for regional comparisons and job function considerations. Following this review, our proposal represented one of the largest percentage increases for these three salaries in many years.

My objection to *File Number 24-342* stems from the amendment adopted by the County Board that increases these salaries by an even larger, unprecedented, and irresponsible dollar amount.

The County Board’s adopted amendment would provide a 28% pay increase to these elected officials at the start of the upcoming term, followed by a 2% pay increase year over year through 2028. After the annual pay increases are accounted for, this would represent a more than 36% salary increase for the Register of Deeds, Treasurer, and County Clerk. By comparison, this percentage salary increase is nine times more than the percentage salary increase the County Board approved for the Comptroller just a few months ago. In total, the County Board’s amended resolution would increase salary costs (excluding social



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security expenses) by more than \$226,000 over the four year term, when compared to the original proposal.

We must be fiscally responsible stewards for Milwaukee County taxpayers. That's why percentage increases of this size are reserved only for positions within County government that are challenging to recruit suitable candidates for, including the Milwaukee County Chief Medical Examiner and the Milwaukee County Zoo Director. In addition, there are zero employee groups and/or positions within Milwaukee County that have set annual percentage increases, with the exception of employees covered under the County's public safety collective bargaining agreements. All other annual increases for eligible employee groups and/or positions are discretionary and not guaranteed. Approving these annual percentage salary increases would create an inequitable, unfair environment between Milwaukee County's elected officials, department leaders, and general employees. Furthermore, providing annual salary increases for elected officials, who are not subject to performance reviews and additional credential requirements, would establish a concerning precedent, given that pay raises for all other department leaders and general employees are determined by those metrics.

At a time when our financial challenges are not resolved and budget deficits are looming in the near future, we need to promote fiscal responsibility and thoughtful spending at every turn. We also must maintain our commitment to equity at all levels of County government. Based on the reasons I've outlined, I don't believe this level of increased salary spending represents an effective, equitable use of our extremely limited resources. I urge the County Board to revisit this file and approve our original proposal that includes reasonable salary increases for these elected positions. I look forward to continuing this dialogue and our partnership, as we work to seek common ground on providing fair pay and benefits to our workforce, while balancing Milwaukee County's long- and short-term fiscal sustainability.

Respectfully,

David C. Crowley
Milwaukee County Executive