



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Chris Abele

MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

DATE: July 29, 2014

TO: The Honorable Milwaukee Board of Supervisors

FROM: Chris Abele, Milwaukee County Executive

RE: Veto of County Board File No. 14-522, a resolution putting a non-binding, advisory referendum question on the November 4, 2014 ballot asking voters if they support increasing the state minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour.

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I am vetoing County Board File No. 14-522 pursuant to the authority granted to me by Article IV, Section 23(a) of the Wisconsin Constitution and Section 59.17(6) of the Wisconsin Statutes.

The County Board adopted a resolution on June 26, 2014 putting a non-binding, advisory referendum question on the November 4, 2014 ballot asking voters if they support increasing the state minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour.

For some time, I have been supportive of a state raise in minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, as well as the President's proposed federal minimum wage at the same level. To try to make that a reality I've been talking with state and federal leaders, including productive conversations earlier this year with Senator Tammy Baldwin's staff, Senator Ron Johnson and Representatives Gwen Moore, Paul Ryan and Tom Petri. As you would expect, Senator Baldwin and Congresswoman Moore are fully supportive of raising the wage. The Republican members of the Wisconsin caucus did not make any promises, but it is an important start to what I believe will be an on-going dialogue. It is also important to note that these efforts do not cost taxpayers any extra money.

As policymakers, one of our most important roles is to prioritize how our limited tax dollars are spent. The Comptroller's Office estimates putting this referendum on the ballot will cost \$25,000 to \$40,000 and will require us to take that money from the contingency fund. This referendum, coupled with the three others the Board has approved could cost taxpayers as much as \$160,000.

In the past, some Supervisors have questioned the legitimacy of the extra cost of referendum questions. I'll defer to the Comptroller and Election Commission for their estimate but it is my understanding that every question put on the ballot has a cost for ink, increasing the size of the paper, programming voting machines and required advertising and voter awareness.

Like you, I believe an open and fair democracy is key to a strong and sustainable government. However, I believe there are less costly and more productive ways to move the debate forward.

Much like the Citizens United referendum, I am worried that we are spending much needed tax dollars on a question that we already know the outcome. A recent poll conducted by UWM shows broad support for raising the minimum wage. According to the poll, 76% of registered voters support raising the state's minimum wage. That poll is another strong indicator of what citizens think and it does not require us to dip into our emergency fund to pay for it. If Supervisors were to pass a resolution stating their opposition to Citizens United or supportive of raising the minimum wage or supportive of expanding BadgerCare, I would happily sign it and do a joint press release. I think that would make as a compelling a statement as a non-binding referendum without costing taxpayers \$40,000.

I know Supervisors have the best intentions when they introduce these resolutions. However, spending down our contingency fund on non-essential items when we are looking at a shrinking surplus this year and a predicted structural deficit of \$31.9 million in 2015 is not the best use of taxpayer money.

I urge you to sustain this veto.