

March 2, 2004

State Representative Dean Kaufert  
Wisconsin State Capitol  
P. O. Box 8952  
Madison, WI 53708

RE: AB819

Dear Dean:

I support AB819 which allows but does not require increasing municipal court costs from a range of \$18 to \$23 per ticket to a range of \$18 to \$28. The present cost structure has not been altered for many years. The proposed Bill simply allows municipalities, by ordinance, after public local debate, to raise the maximum court costs by \$5.

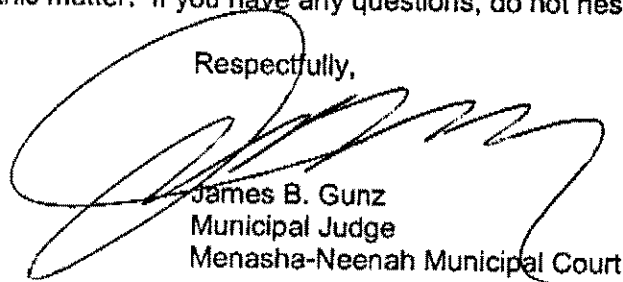
As you know, the cities of Menasha and Neenah jointly created the Menasha-Neenah Municipal Court in May of 2002. The joint effort was the first of several municipal consolidation efforts (i.e. Fire Services merged in 2003, Police Consolidation talks are ongoing). In my opinion the consolidated Municipal Court provides a wide range of non-monetary efficiencies in handling the 5000± municipal ordinance cases annually. These efficiencies are sometimes difficult to quantify in dollars and cents. (Example-defendants appearing locally-as opposed to traveling to Oshkosh.) The proposed \$5 increase would simply allow (not require) the Menasha and Neenah Common Councils, after public debate, to increase the court cost structure to more adequately defray the additional local costs associated with establishing and running a Municipal Court.

As you know, the total fine structure in the Menasha-Neenah Municipal Court is \$51 per ticket less than the same ticket being administered in Circuit Court. This Bill would simply allow that differential to be reduced to \$46. (Example: 10 over speed in Municipal Court - fine is presently \$77.20, proposal, if locally adopted, that fine would become \$82.20 - same ticket in Circuit Court the fine is \$128.20.)

I'm painfully aware of the political ramification associated with proposals dubbed tax or fee increases. I submit the Bill is neither. It simply allows individual municipalities the latitude to cover costs associated with administering local (i.e. more efficient) municipal courts. The system has historically proven more efficient and less costly than increasing the size of the Circuit Court System.

Finance Directors Mike Easker, Neenah and Tom Stoffel of Menasha concur my comments. We all appreciate your support in this matter. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call.

Respectfully,



James B. Gunz  
Municipal Judge  
Menasha-Neenah Municipal Court