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Details:

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2009-10

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Education (SC-Ed)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
(**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
(**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

* Contents organized for archiving by: Gigi Godwin (LRB) (August/2011)

Stromme, Denise

From: Chris Ahmuty [cahmuty@aclu-wi.org]
Sent: Wednesday, January 06, 2010 11:56 AM
To: Sen. Lehman
Subject: ACLU WI asks for Sen. Lehman's leadership on education

SARA
 To SB 405 *[signature]*



207 East Buffalo Street, Suite 325
 Milwaukee, WI 53202-5774

For Immediate Release: January 6, 2010

Contact: Christopher Ahmuty, Executive Director, (414) 272-4032, ext. 13

**ACLU of Wisconsin
 Statement in support of
 Legislative action on public schools.**

Milwaukee, WI: On January 6, 2010 the ACLU of Wisconsin's executive director Christopher Ahmuty sent the following statement to members of the Wisconsin Legislature and Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. He urged them to move beyond a perceived impasse on legislation to aid the Milwaukee Public Schools. Ahmuty's statement:

Some media, including the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and Wispolitics.com, report that after a January 5th marathon hearing on Milwaukee Public Schools, the Wisconsin Legislature is unlikely to come up with a fix for the district's woes any time soon. As someone who attended the hearing for eight hours, I believe the media reports misrepresent the current situation.

While the prospect of a mayoral takeover of MPS should be dead, that doesn't mean that the Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and legislative leaders can't or won't display the kind of leadership on education that both opponents and proponents of mayoral control would welcome. Mayor Barrett, in particular, can still deliver for MPS and parents and students across Wisconsin by agreeing to legislation that would address the core issues we all face.

The school funding formula adopted by the Legislature in 1992 is a shambles and needs to be replaced. Public schools need the resources to provide an adequate education to their students. Different districts have different needs. Poor rural and urban districts (including Beloit and Racine as well as Milwaukee) have challenges that wealthier districts do not face. A new formula can help districts with concentrations of poor students, English language learners, and special needs without harming districts with more advantaged students. A good way to enhance Governor Doyle legacy on educational issues might be to revisit the 2004 recommendations of Doyle's Task Force on Educational Excellence for additional measures that would help districts across the state.

A proposal by State Senator Spencer Coggs and State Representative Tamara Grigsby could be modified to include provisions on funding that will help districts statewide, not just Milwaukee. Barrett and legislative leaders could be statesmen, if Barrett recognizes the needs of districts statewide, just as legislators must now recognize the urgent needs of MPS, not for control, but for support from all segments of the public and all parts of Wisconsin.

--30--



9 to 5

Stromme, Denise

From: Amy Stear [amys@9to5.org]
Sent: Thursday, January 14, 2010 12:16 PM
To: Sen. Lehman
Cc: Sen. Coggs; Rep. Grigsby
Subject: Milwaukee hearing on MPS mayoral takeover

January 12, 2010

Senator John Lehman

Chair, Senate Committee on Education

Room 310 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707

Save
MPS

Dear Senator Lehman,

Thank you for convening last week's public hearing on the future of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). For parents, holding the hearing in Milwaukee was of the utmost importance. Community input is essential toward making any decision related to effective education reform and, as Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, you have shown true leadership by bringing your committee to Milwaukee. As this issue moves forward, it is important to highlight inconsistencies between the proposed takeover legislation and the reality that citizens of Milwaukee currently face.

Senate Bill 405 would give the Mayor of Milwaukee total control of the city's school district. Supporters of this legislation argue that the community will have ultimate say over MPS by way of a referendum on the issue seven years after implementation of mayoral takeover; however, the possibility of this future referendum being ignored is very real and raises extreme concerns. If Milwaukee's 2008 referendum on paid sick days is any indication, there is no guarantee that the will of the people will be recognized through a referendum on MPS.

On November 4, 2008, 69% of Milwaukee's voters said yes to a binding referendum that would allow workers to earn paid sick time for hours they work throughout the year. 42,000 Milwaukeeans signed a petition to put the paid sick days referendum to a vote and while an overwhelming majority of voters supported this binding referendum, special interest groups opposing this minimum standard for workers have stopped at nothing to circumvent the will of the people. Specifically, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce (MMAC) continues to challenge this binding referendum that would provide low-wage women and families in Milwaukee with a basic right.

MMAC has been relentless in its efforts to stop the will of the people. This raises the concern that the groups pushing for mayoral control of our public schools will not adhere to a binding referendum on MPS governance, particularly since MMAC continues its opposition to the binding referendum on paid sick days. As Chair of the Senate Education Committee, we hope you recognize this threat and oppose mayoral control of Milwaukee Public Schools.

If members of your committee wish to represent the will of Milwaukee, they should look no further than last week's public hearing on the future of MPS, at which **those opposing mayoral takeover outnumbered supporters by a three to one margin**. Rather than supporting mayoral takeover, committee members should look to the RACE for Success Act, a compromise offered by Representative Tamara Grigsby and Senator Spencer Coggs. This proposal serves as a much better representation of what Milwaukee's parents hope for their children.

Again, the vote on paid sick days was a binding referendum.

The efforts of MMAC to circumvent that initiative means the promise of a referendum on MPS in no way guarantees the will of the people will be recognized. MMAC considers mayoral takeover one of its top priorities, yet their chief lobbyist maintains that the binding referendum related to paid sick days constitutes "a sort of terrorism." These factors leave little doubt as to how MMAC would respond in the future to a binding referendum that would restore control of MPS to the democratically elected school board.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Amy Stear

WI Director 9to5

on behalf of the staff and members

of Wisconsin 9to5

--

Amy Stear

WI Director

9to5, National Association of Working Women



JAN 19 2010

Memo

**To the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly Education Committees
From the Education Committee of MICAH**

Milwaukee Innercity Congregations Allied for Hope

Fr. Thomas Mueller, Chairman

2515 South 30th Street

Milwaukee, WI. 53215

414 671 5819, cell 414 828 5801

SB 405?

January 14, 2010

MICAH is an interfaith organization of thirty-some congregations. Our Education Committee is one of the vital task forces of the organization. MICAH is a member organization of the Coalition Against Mayoral Takeover of MPS. Our representatives have participated in all of the weekly meetings of the Coalition going back to September, 2009. We have taken part in rallies, forums, community organizing, trips to the Capitol, letter-writing, and phone campaigns. Stopping the takeover has been our major focus for the past several months, but we have been involved proactively with MPS for twenty years. Most recently, we have worked to improve health care in MPS, particularly by bringing 24 new full time nurses into MPS under BadgerCare Plus. We understand that poor health is one of the strongest impediments to improving educational outcomes in urban schools. Previously we worked to insure that the many homeless and overly mobile students in MPS would not suffer from the implementation of the Neighborhood Schools Initiative and that there would remain a strong measure of parental choice in public education in Milwaukee. Our committee was instrumental in the initiation and expansion of the demonstrably successful SAGE program. We are not nay-sayers or obstructionists, but people of faith who want the best for MPS students.

We do not believe that mayoral takeover is principally about seeking better education for children in poverty. We believe it has more to do with money, power, and privatization. The examples of New York and Chicago are illustrative, if one examines the research seriously.

We are writing to urge you not buy into any "compromise" version of SB 405 that would put a gloss on what is essentially a misbegotten and ill-conceived idea. We regard the Coggs-Grigsby proposal as being already a compromise, and we oppose compromising direct, local control of MPS any further. The amendment of SB 405 that was outlined in the Journal-Sentinel today is a sham. The mayor would still appoint and control the superintendent and would set the budget. The Board could only reject the mayoral appointee or override the mayor's budgetary power by a 3/4 supermajority vote. This would mean 7 out of 9 Board votes. As a morsel thrown to the Board, this is virtually meaningless. More importantly, the power to close schools and to dismiss staff would be solely in the hands of the mayor's

appointee. The way to closing public schools, without parental consent, and to replace them with privately-run and publicly-financed charters would be open. Is this what the takeover is really about?

We strongly urge you not to accept any such false compromise. Reforming schools is not principally a matter of governance from the top. We believe that it is dependent on engaging and empowering parents and community in and around their schools. Our committee and the Coalition in which we are proud to participate are committed to working collaboratively toward this end. We hope that the State and the Mayor will work with us.

The MICAH Education Committee

F. Thomas Mueller

Reginald Athon

M. Felise Rettle, SSND

Clifford Cooper

~~Don Brack~~

Dr. Karen Van Bunt-Framers

Carol Pawlak

Karolyn Anderson

Johnson R. McMuray

Jacoveteen de V. MICAH

William Martin

Thomas R. Niebler

Wennis Lewis

Jina S. Mueller

Rev. Louis F. Sibley III





**MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Michael Bonds, President
Milwaukee Board of School Directors, District 3

3519 N. 50th St., Milwaukee, WI 53216
Phone (414) 520-3890 ■ Fax (414) 442-1161

January 18, 2010

SB 405?

Governor Jim Doyle
Office of the Governor
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Doyle:

As President of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors, I am writing to express my disappointment with your cynical statement regarding Wisconsin's Race to the Top (RTT) application. In your release, you predict that the application will fail because it does not include mayoral control of the Milwaukee Public Schools District (MPS). You also argue that the Legislature's refusal to adopt your mayoral control proposal in Milwaukee will cost other school districts millions of dollars.

Since mayoral control is not a requirement for Race To the Top dollars, your statement can only be interpreted as a political attempt to turn the rest of the state against MPS and to intimidate legislators who oppose mayoral control into supporting your proposal.

The facts are as follows:

Facts:

1. The Race to The Top program (RTT) guidelines DO NOT require a change in MPS governance structure (mayoral control) as a condition for RTT funding.
2. President Barack Obama has never called for mayoral control of MPS. Even in his visit to Madison, Wisconsin, in 2009 to promote education reform, he never mentioned mayoral control of MPS.
3. In a letter to Congresswoman Gwen Moore, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was unequivocal in stating that mayoral control is not a criterion for RTT applications.
4. In 2009, Secretary Duncan specifically called for a mayoral partnership in Milwaukee rather than a mayoral control. He urged partnership, rather than mayoral control, in three cities: Milwaukee, Los Angeles, and Detroit. I wrote Mayor Tom Barrett about such a partnership, and he did not bother responding to me. Instead, he stated in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that he was not interested in shared governance with the MPS Board.



Working Together
Achieving More
<http://wrtam.milwaukee.k12.wi.us>

Milwaukee Board of School Directors

5225 W. Vliet St., Room 273 • Milwaukee, WI 53208

Phone: (414) 475-8284 • FAX: (414) 475-8071 • governance@milwaukee.k12.wi.us

www.milwaukee.k12.wi.us Click on Milwaukee Board of School Directors

5. State Senator Spencer Coggs and State Representative Tamara Grigsby have proposed legislation that institutionalizes the very partnership Secretary Duncan called for by recognizing the important governing role of Milwaukee's elected school board while establishing significant mayoral oversight. Their proposal gives the mayor more power with MPS than in any time in the City's history. Governor Doyle, you have refused to even consider this proposal.
6. The Race to the Top application is a statewide application impacting all 400+ school districts in the state. Yet MPS is the only school district being asked to change its governing structure for the RTT application, even though several other school districts have larger racial achievement gaps than does MPS.
7. The *New York Times* ranked all 50 states on their odds of receiving RTT dollars based on the RTT criteria. Wisconsin ranked at the bottom. That suggests that Wisconsin's chances of receiving these funds are slim to none.
8. The Gates Foundation provided funds to the 15 states that it identified as most likely to receive the RTT funds to assist them in preparing their RTT applications. Wisconsin was not among them. The states awarded the grants were mainly from the South and East with large blocks of electoral votes.
9. The Race to The Top (RTT) application requires innovation and partnership with other states. Wisconsin's RTT application does not include such partnerships or innovation.
10. Most of Wisconsin's education unions did not sign the memorandum of understanding (MOU) because the state provided only a partial application for review. In effect, the state asked local school teacher unions and local school districts to sign a lease without providing the terms of the lease until it was signed. Unions were unable or unwilling to sign on, as they were unable to determine how the application terms might affect their contracts and bargaining positions.
11. Given that most of Wisconsin's education unions did not sign the memorandum of understanding (MOU), the state's application has a much smaller chance of succeeding, as it will not get the review points available for those signatures. Also, the lack of endorsements from the education unions illustrates the state's failure to work with all stakeholders in developing this application.
12. There is no simple solution to improving urban education. Recent studies on districts under mayoral control in Chicago, New York, and Washington D.C. indicate little or no academic improvement and that test results are often tampered with.
13. In a federal test that has been used to document Milwaukee's low levels of student achievement, students in mayoral controlled districts performed at the same level or worse than do Milwaukee's students.
14. The advocates of mayoral control have not provided any educational plan for improving student achievement.

15. Despite numerous public meetings, including one by the Wisconsin Senate Education Committee in Milwaukee, where the public overwhelmingly opposed the mayoral takeover, you continue to insist that mayoral control is non-negotiable. If any other community in the state had voiced such strong opposition to a similar proposal, the issue would have been dropped months ago!!!
16. The current MPS Board has been working with MPS Administration and its teachers union to deal with its unfunded liability. And the current MPS Board started taking actions (prepaying pension obligations, implementing a hiring freeze, implementing health awareness and prevention programs for its employees, funding the Seager Report that studied MPS fringe benefits and pension issues, and so forth) to deal with the unfunded liability which the current MPS Board inherited in 2007.
17. The current MPS Board has duplicated successful academic programs and expanded other academic programs (increased math and science requirements for graduation, tripled the number of Project-Lead-The-Way Programs [STEM], required ACT testing for 11th-graders, standardized reading programs, etc.) in the district since 2007.
18. The current MPS Board has redirected between \$115 and \$130 million back into the schools since 2007 for a variety of programs (driver's education, safety, nursing services, arts, music, sports, parental involvement, universal breakfast, early childhood education, etc.).
19. The MPS Board started the process of searching for a new MPS Superintendent in July 2009, nearly seven months ago. It hired a nationally recognized superintendent search firm, Ray & Associates, to assist with the search.
20. Despite the cloud of a mayoral control over MPS, 44 people from around the nation completed the application for MPS Superintendent. MPS has three nationally recognized educators as its final three candidates for MPS Superintendent.
21. The MPS Board president personally invited Milwaukee's mayor to provide input into the MPS superintendent search process. The Mayor submitted seven criteria that he wanted to see in a superintendent. Those seven criteria were included in the job description for MPS Superintendent.
22. Milwaukee's mayor had an opportunity to interview MPS's three final candidates for the MPS superintendent position as part of a broad and diverse 13-member community stakeholder group. He interviewed all three candidates as part of that process last week.

Governor Doyle, your effort to scapegoat the Wisconsin Legislature and MPS for Wisconsin's predicted failure to secure Race to the Top Dollars and to turn people around the state against MPS is the worst kind of demagoguery. It will not help to improve educational achievement in Milwaukee, nor build the kind of partnerships between the people of the state's largest city and your administration that are needed to turn our troubled school system around.

January 18, 2010

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Despite your cynical press release, the MPS Board of School Directors wants to partner with you, the Legislature, and the Mayor in crafting policies that will improve the academic performance of Milwaukee's children. We urge you to work with us rather than against us.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding this matter, please contact me.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Bonds". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael Bonds
President, Milwaukee Board of School Directors

cc: Mayor Tom Barrett
All Common Council Members
All Wisconsin State Legislators (Senate & Assembly)
U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan
Milwaukee Board of School Directors Members
MPS Superintendent William Andrekoupoulos



MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

NAACP, Milwaukee Branch
Educators' Network for Social Justice
9 to 5 Milwaukee
AFT Local 212
American Federation of Teachers Local 2169
Citizen Action of Wisconsin
Equality Wisconsin
Esperanza Unida
Greater Milwaukee Green Party
Milwaukee Inner-City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)
Milwaukee Professional Association (MPA)
Milwaukee Students for a Democratic Society
Mothers of the Struggle
Milwaukee Teachers Education Association (MTEA)
NAACP, Wisconsin State Conference of Chapters
National Lawyers Guild, Milwaukee Chapter
People United for MPS (PUMPS)
Prevention Rehabilitation Awareness Development (PRAD)
Progressive Students of Milwaukee
Rethinking Schools
SEIU Local 150
Socialist Party of Wisconsin
The Milwaukee Chapter Board of the ACLU of Wisconsin
Title One District Advisory Council
UWM English Education Association
Voices de la Frontera
Voice of the Central City
WISDOM

PUBLIC OFFICIALS

Peter Blewett, MPS Board Member
Commissioner Hattie Daniels
Larry Miller, MPS Board Member
Jennifer Morales, former MPS Board Member
Leon Todd, former MPS Board Member
Tony Zielinski, Milwaukee Alderman

The Coalition to Stop the MPS Takeover

c/o The Milwaukee Branch of the NAACP
2745 North Martin Luther King Drive
Milwaukee, WI 53212

SB 405?

January 19, 2010

Dear Assembly Education Committee and
Senate Education Committee,

The Milwaukee Coalition to Stop the MPS Takeover comprises 28 community, educator, religious, labor, civil rights, and parent organizations representing thousands of people of Milwaukee. We are writing to call your attention to some of our concerns about the current status of pending legislation regarding the Milwaukee Public Schools.

• **Our 75% majority at hearing.** The January 5 public hearing in Milwaukee demonstrated broad and significant opposition to the proposed takeover of the Milwaukee Public Schools. Press reports the day after the hearing were highly inaccurate. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, for example, reported, "members of the public at the hearing were fairly evenly divided." Senator Lehman's official tally from the public hearing showed a completely different set of facts: Of those who spoke, 81 opposed mayoral control and only 20 were in favor. Of all those who registered an opinion, 299 were opposed, and only 99 were in favor.

• **No status quo.** Some proponents of mayoral takeover of MPS continue to characterize those of us who oppose such a takeover as people who "love" or "cling" to the "status quo." Nothing could be further from the truth. Our coalition includes organizations and individuals who have been strong advocates for change within MPS for years, people who have dedicated their lives to such changes and who have brought about significant changes that have improved teaching and learning in MPS. We agree that additional and significant changes have to be made, but the continued misrepresentation of our perspective and motives only demeans the debate.

• **Changes to education.** The significant changes that need to be made in MPS are not in the area of governance. Please focus on educational reform. Several of our member organizations have offered suggestions that will bring genuine education reform to Milwaukee. We encourage you to focus your energies on those genuine reform suggestions and not tinker with governance issues.

• **Invest in parent and community engagement.** A key principle of unity of our coalition is to “increase and invest in parent and community involvement in our schools.” We believe that maintaining an elected school board that has full power is a precondition for this, however, much more needs to be done. For example, we need parent organizers/educators in every school and much stronger ties connecting neighborhood schools and community organizations to social service agencies.

• **Equitable funding.** The school finance system in Wisconsin is broken. Regardless who is in control of the school systems of the state, we as a state must invest more in our children and their education. We encourage you to exercise leadership so this difficult issue can be addressed as soon as possible.

• **Enfranchise Latino/as.** The one governance change that our coalition agrees to is the need to eliminate the city-wide school board seat and replace it with a ninth seat that is based on geographical area— preferably changing district boundaries so there is an increased chance of getting Latino representation on the school board.

We thank you in advance for listening to our concerns. We remain willing to meet with you or your staff to provide more details on any of the above-mentioned matters.

Sincerely,

Bob Peterson and Wendell Harris

Co-chairs of the Coalition to Stop the MPS Takeover



WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

Affiliated with the National Education Association

*Great Schools
benefit
Everyone!*

To: Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature
From: Wisconsin Education Association Council
Date: January 26, 2010
Re: Opposition to MPS Mayoral Takeover (SB 405/AB 615)
Support for the Coggs/Grigsby Plan (SB 462/AB 669)

The Wisconsin Education Association Council stands with the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association in opposing a mayoral takeover of Milwaukee Public Schools, as proposed in SB 405/AB 615, and, instead, advocating for reforms that are rooted in proven research and results.

Educators recognize that significant and system-wide change is needed for Milwaukee Public Schools. However, simply transferring responsibility to one person, such as the mayor, will not produce lasting results in struggling schools. We need a systemic approach that can be supported by those who work in the schools and with the students. This is not about making quick changes as a means to receive one-time federal monies. It is about establishing thoughtful policy that will engage the education and business community in a discussion about what we can do differently to help Wisconsin's students succeed.

Mayoral control won't guarantee that the essential elements needed for any successful school will be provided: small class sizes; safe and secure learning environments; modern technologies and curriculum; and most importantly, highly qualified, caring and competent teachers and support staff.

To close achievement gaps and boost student success, Milwaukee educators have developed the Milwaukee Opportunity Plan with a focus on what they know works best when it comes to student learning, leading to enhanced opportunities for students. Like the Coggs/Grigsby proposal (SB 462/AB 669), this plan emphasizes fiscal accountability; increased parent involvement and voter participation; an acknowledgement of the need for a more consistent, high-quality curriculum; establishing Promise Neighborhoods through federal grants; and a small class size model for 9th grade similar to SAGE.

WEAC hopes these plans for real reform will refocus the discussions among policymakers about moving Milwaukee and the state forward. The future of Milwaukee's public schools is a statewide issue. As schools improve in Milwaukee, the community and the city's economic future will improve. And Milwaukee's success impacts the rest of our state.

If you have any questions, contact Deb Sybell, WEAC Legislative Program Coordinator, at (608) 298-2327.

Mary Bell, President
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director





Date?

SB 405 MOYORAL GOVERNANCE OF MPS:

I support Mayoral Governance of MPS because I believe the Mayor is best positioned to impact all aspects of public education in the city of Milwaukee. And I believe the Mayor is best able to TRANSFORM MPS. Mayoral Governance, in my opinion, would profoundly impact, improve, restore and reverse an educational system that is broken and grossly dysfunctional and robs many students of a chance to receive a quality education and that same broken system impede the path of visionary hope and the dream of life long learning for many students.

Thus, SB 405 would reposition the Mayor with authority and Governance of MPS:

1. To ensure ACCOUNTABILITY at all levels of the system,
2. To appoint MPS Superintendent,
3. To hire and fire Superintendent,
4. To close the RACIAL ACHIEVEMENT GAP:
 - Wisconsin has the highest BLACK/WHITE ACHIEVEMENT GAP in reading for both 4th and 8th grade.
 - Wisconsin has the worst absolute reading scores for African-Americans of any STATE—both 4th and 8th GRADERS.
 - 19% of AFRICAN—AMERICAN 10th graders are proficient in math vs 59% of WHITE 10th graders.
 - 31% of AFRICAN—AMERICAN 10th graders are proficient in reading vs 65% of WHITE 10th graders.
5. To help develop and define the concept and characteristics of all great schools:
 - Adequate Funding,
 - Tough Academic Standards,
 - Effective Teachers,
 - An Effective Way To Track Students Performance, and
 - A PLAN TO TURN AROUND FAILING SCHOOLS.

Pastor Mose Fuller, ST. Timothy Baptist Church.



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF WISCONSIN

SENATE BILL 405

Date?

Good morning,

My name is Rogers E. Onick. My address is 1425 North Cass Street Milwaukee 53202. In July of this year, I retired from the Milwaukee Public Schools after 40 years of service including my last 19 years as principal of Samuel Morse Middle School for the Gifted and Talented. I am president of the Metropolitan Milwaukee Alliance of Black School Educators, Incorporated, (MMABSE) Wisconsin's premiere black professional organization dedicated to enhancing and facilitating the education of all students particularly those of African American descent. MMABSE is not taking a stand on school governance at this time.

Nonetheless we do have a plan for improving the Milwaukee Public Schools. This ~~morning~~ morning I stand before you to share my personally held position.

am in favor of Senate Bill 405. We appear to have a district under-performing in view of public expectations. We've witnessed improvements, and for those who would disagree with me, I still maintain that incremental progress is progress nonetheless. It is worth celebrating. Senate Bill 405, in my opinion, offers possibilities for moving us ever so closely to where we can say proudly that all children are able to demonstrate survival skills required of a global community. I'm not talking just about the ability to perform well on tests for our aim must not be to produce just citizens who are excellent test takers. Curiosity, imagination, initiative, agility and adaptability are critical. Schools are not failing. The system is obsolete. How are the bills debated before you framing the problem? We need a superintendent accountable to one person, not several. These are urgent times. We are in a crisis. We know what is before us. We are living it. I just can't help thinking that the way things are is not the way things can be.

For hundreds of years we have maintained the status quo in the way public schools are governed. It is time to do something different.

what the all the data suggest about failing schools, low graduation rates, low performance on high-stake tests, and overall poor academic performance. But we need to reframe the "problems." Schools are not failing. The system is obsolete. We need to reinvent the Milwaukee Public Schools system. To paraphrase Einstein, no problem can ever be solved from the same consciousness that created it.

I support ~~the~~ Senate Bill 405 introduced by Senators Taylor, Plale and Carpenter and cosponsored by Representatives by Colon, Fields, Richards, and others.

Given the current "crisis" in our school district, it makes sense in my ~~opinion~~ opinion to create a different protocol for addressing the level of academic paralysis and apparent district dysfunction. The mayor can cut through bureaucratic obstacles, work closely with the Department of Public Instruction, and leverage resources to schools comparable with high-level needs, gain milestone business and foundation support, and embrace a level of accountability raised to a higher level of public expectation.

Our current "crisis" is the outgrowth of the present system. Our children have been the recipients. Now is the time for reinvention, not reform which is a fad. We need bold action. We have a wondrous opportunity

to create our destiny. We have another opportunity to ~~make~~ to make Senate Bill 405 work. It is a call for reinvention. It is a call for improving the system that is failing too many of our students.

~~It~~ Senate Bill 405 is about overhauling key aspects of the district governance so that what we all want occurs in dramatic: systemic change for student success.

years? ~~Mayoral control means a reformulation of the problem. The system is broken and needs to be fixed. Uncertainty is always the creation behind change. Singular power in one person's hand as an argument does not pass the logic test. What do we have now? Schools have always been political. Why do we have elections? Why is their state control? We have the power to elect an enlightened, knowledgeable, and committed mayor. Where is our confidence in each other? We apparently have demonstrated it in the pattern of low voter turn-out at school board elections. Yes, we want money for Wisconsin, and why shouldn't we?~~

financial resources. President Obama, on the other hand, has made funds available at the outset with specific criteria for securing those funds. I expect that the Milwaukee Public Schools will get the largest proportion ~~since the Senate Bill is directed at us; otherwise I have a problem.~~ Given the current state of funding our school districts especially MPS, where has the entire public clamor been heretofore about these funding inequities, yet we want to make Race to the Top dollars an issue? Hypocrisy!

We have a moment in time to ~~embrace our students as we never have before.~~ We are the ones our students have been looking waiting for. We cannot let them down. We cannot let our parents down. We cannot let our teachers down. We cannot let our principals down. Let Wisconsin stand tall and

lead in the 21st Century. Our students' lives depend on our brave, bold, creative, and visionary leadership.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to address you. ~~Yours is a difficult decision. I do not believe that the majority of parents in the City of Milwaukee are satisfied with the status quo and the life prospects for their children given the current crisis in education today. The good marks they give us do not mean that they do not dream of a better future for their children and the schools to whom they entrust their children. Schools are not the problem. The system is obsolete. Do we all have an urgent sense of the crisis in American education today? Do we see that the 21st Century calls for us among other things to seek curiosity and imagination; collaborate across all sectors of our community; demonstrate agility and adaptability; and show initiative?~~ It is my singular, sole, and personal commitment to the possibilities of Senate Bill 405 that I am here this morning. Again, thank you for this opportunity.



and below and the proposed statement.

Date?

STATEMENT OF JERRY ANNHAMILTON
PRESIDENT MILWAUKEE BRANCH NAACP
IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 405

JERRY ANN HAMILTON
MILW BRANCH NAACP

My name is Jerry Ann Hamilton, President of the Milwaukee Branch NAACP. First of all, we thank the Senate Committee on Education for holding this public hearing in Milwaukee.

Founded in 1909 the NAACP is the nation's premier civil rights organization. The Milwaukee Branch NAACP has been in existence since 1919, and has actively worked to secure, maintain and advance civil rights for all people in the Milwaukee Metropolitan area.

Today, we speak in opposition of Senate Bill 405, the proposed mayoral takeover of the Milwaukee Public School system.

If passed, Senate Bill 405 will change control of MPS from an elected multi-member policymaking body - representing the varied educational interests in the community - to a one-person policymaking body appointed by the mayor and accountable not to the public, but to the mayor, whomever the mayor may be.

The legislation discriminatorily assumes that the people of the City of Milwaukee, and only the people of the City of Milwaukee, are incompetent of electing representatives to manage their local school system. In fact, the legislation goes much further it assumes that the citizens of Milwaukee are incapable of having any substantial input into local education matters.

In the remaining time, I would like to discuss the unwarranted invasion of voting rights.

Wisconsin was one of the first states to allow African Americans to vote. In 1835, Joe Oliver, the first African American settler in Milwaukee, became the first African American voter in Milwaukee. Under law, African Americans were not entitled to vote, but local officials allowed Oliver to cast a ballot in Milwaukee's very first election. Milwaukee was relatively progressive, and Oliver represented the sole African American vote. What harm could there be? As minority voting power increased officials were less willing to allow African Americans to vote.

The issue of statewide African American suffrage was brought up at Wisconsin's first constitutional convention in 1846. Opponents suggested that suffrage should not be granted to African Americans because "Every negro was a thief and every negro woman much worse." Proponents of African American suffrage argued that the rights of African Americans could only be secured "by placing in his hand the instrument of his defense - the ballot." The parties compromised and decided to put the question of African American suffrage to the voters. Voters refused to allow African American suffrage.

Voters would consider the question over the next several years without success. Having failed in 1847 and 1848 to obtain the right of vote for African American residents, voting rights advocates returned to the polls in November 1849 and overwhelming supported 56% to 44%, an amendment to the State Constitution that mandated African American suffrage.

African Americans would not be allowed to exercise their right to vote until successful completion a lengthy court battle. State officials motivated by racist ideas of African American inferiority pulled a fast one. While conceding that more voters had voted in favor of the amendment than against the amendment, state officials oddly held that since a majority of all electors had not voted on the question of African American suffrage the outcome was not valid. Of course, this was nonsense, but it was good enough to delay African American suffrage in Wisconsin for nearly two decades.

On October 31, 1865, Ezekiel Gillespie, an African American residing in Milwaukee, attempted to register for the 1865 election. His request was denied. Undeterred, he returned the next day to vote. His ballot was not accepted. Gillespie filed a lawsuit alleging that he and other Wisconsin African Americans had obtained the right to vote in 1849. In March 1866, the Wisconsin Supreme Court lambasted state officials and held that the 1849 Constitutional Amendment was valid marking the beginning of African American suffrage in Wisconsin.

After completion of the Civil War, the 15th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified giving all citizens the right to vote regardless of race. African Americans experienced early successes. In 1869, the first African Americans were elected to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

There was a cost. These early successes ushered in nearly one hundred years of intimidation against African American electors. Advances in African American voting power were countered with measures to prohibit African American participation in the electoral process.

Several states implemented laws to mitigate the guarantees of the 15th Amendments. State legislatures enacted property requirements, English proficiency and literacy tests, poll taxes, gerrymandering, grandfather clauses, at-large districts, white-only primaries, ballot-manipulation, etc. Public officials and private citizens initiated campaigns of violence and intimidation, including threats of violence, beatings, rapes, lynchings, termination of employment and rental agreements, and interference with contracts against minority electors and their families.

In 1944, former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall (then a NAACP lawyer) successfully argued that white-only primaries violated the 15th Amendment.

In 1960, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed gerrymandering. In 1961, Cornelius Golightly became the first AA elected to school board

On June 12, 1963, Mississippi NAACP leader Medgar Evers, a tireless voting rights advocate (and a person I had the pleasure to meet and interview) was shot and killed in his driveway while his wife and kids were inside his home only a few yards away.

On January 23, 1964, Congress ratified the 24th Amendment abolishing the use of poll taxes. That summer, on July 21, 1964, voting rights activists James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner were pulled over in Neshoba County, Mississippi, and arrested on trumped up traffic charges.

They were released, but were soon stopped on the road by a mob, which included local law enforcement officials and members of the Klu Klux Klan. Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner were not seen alive again. On August 24, 1964, their badly beaten bodies were found buried in a mud dam.

In the summer of 1964, voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer who had previously been beaten within moments of her life for trying to exercise her right to vote, lead a delegation to the Democratic National Convention to challenge Mississippi's all-white Democratic delegation because Mississippi's Democratic Party did not allow African Americans to vote in primaries. Hamer successfully lobbied the Democratic Party for a resolution holding that no delegation would be seated from any state that refused to allow people to vote because of their race.

In March 1965, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led voting rights activists on a march from Selma, Alabama, to Birmingham, Alabama, to protest voting rights atrocities in Alabama. As the marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus bridge they were attacked by police who shot tear gas into the crowd, and beat, kicked and whipped the marchers with night sticks. Hundreds of people were injured. Fifty people were hospitalized. Undeterred, the marcher returned time and time again, until they bravely and successfully completed their journey.

In 1965, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act which firmly established the right of African Americans to vote fairly in freely, and a new era of African American electoral successes began. In 1968, nine African Americans were elected to Congress, the most since 1875.

Time does not permit more examples of the dedication and sacrifices of voting rights activists of all races. Suffice it to say that because of the brave actions of thousands of voting rights activists all Americans enjoy the right to vote today. That does not mean, however, that the right to vote is not constantly under attack.

Obtaining the right to vote took work. Maintaining the right to vote will take no less. We sit here are heirs of voting rights secured through the determination, blood and ultimate sacrifice of others. We are morally opposed to squandering these rights on loose promises of improved educational outcomes wholly unsupported by verifiable evidence.

History teaches us that the infringement of voting rights can take many forms. Politicians may directly eliminate a citizen's right to vote. Or as proposed here, in Senate Bill 405, politicians may leave intact the right to vote, but undermine the effectiveness of a citizen's voting power by curtailing the power of an elected body. In the end, even the most simple-minded realize that the effect is the same - the voice of the voter is muted.

Gone are poll taxes, English proficiency tests and gerrymandering, however, other threats - elimination of elected bodies comprised of minorities or influenced by minorities, felony disenfranchisement laws, abusive election-day challenges, and Voter ID requirements - remain. These modern-day threats are on the same moral plane as previous threats to our voting rights. They represent different sides of the same coin.

Indeed, the threat to voting rights presented by Senate Bill 405 is as great as any threat we have observed in several decades. It is greater even than the annual threat of Voter ID.

Under Voter ID proposals, lawful voters are made to jump through discriminatory and unwarranted obstacles to the ballot box, but in the end these lawful voters still have the ability to elect a meaningful governing body. Under Senate Bill 405, lawful voters within the City of Milwaukee lose the ability to elect meaningful representation.

The loss of the ability to elect meaningful representation is repugnant to democratic ideas. It is no wonder, recent polls show most people oppose the mayoral takeover of MPS.

We owe too great a debt to those who struggled before us, to allow intrusions upon our voting rights in exchange for a one-time pursuit of federal dollars. We did not secure our voting rights without a fight, and we are not inclined to give them up without the same.

Our right to vote is not for sale to any politician - Democratic, Republican, African American, Caucasian, or Latino. It is not for sale to public school supporters, nor public school haters. It is not for sale for federal dollars, state dollars, local dollars, or private dollars. It is simply not for sale.

The three most popular arguments in support of this radical legislation are: 1) the need for change; 2) the need for accountability; and 3) the long-standing achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students.

We can quickly dispose of these arguments. First of all, we can all agree that change is needed. The question is what kind of change. It has become popular to say that unless there is a governance change MPS will experience the same results. There is simply no evidence to support this argument.

President Michael Bonds has ushered in change. There is learning taking place in MPS. Sure, much more needs to take place, however, this radical legislation is not the change that is needed. We continue to favor increasing the time students spend with quality teachers through small class sizes and extended school year.

Secondly, the promise of accountability is illusory. There is simply no evidence that the proposal would lead to greater accountability. There are multiple strains and duties placed on the Mayor. This proposal sets in place a mechanism where the future needs of students will be balanced against city services, such as street and pothole repair, snow removal, and garbage pick-up. In selecting a mayor, voters weigh the mayor's effectiveness in a variety of areas. The mayor's ineffectiveness in increasing student achievement could easily be outweighed by his effectiveness in providing another city service. The education of our children is too important to compete with these other city services.

Proponents suggest it is unlikely that educational needs will be balanced against city services. We strongly disagree. For instance, the legislation establishes a seven-member budget committee to advise the Superintendent. The members of the budget committee are: the City of Milwaukee Comptroller, the City of Milwaukee Council Common President, three members appointed by the Mayor, the President of the Milwaukee School Board, and the State Superintendent of Schools.

The budget committee is dominated by City of Milwaukee officials, or their designees. It will be impossible for City officials to consider an appropriate school budget without also considering the net impact on the overall property tax.

Lastly, proponents suggest that a governance change is necessary because of the achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students. Nothing in this legislation will lead to increased reading and math scores.

In conclusion, we are against the proposed mayoral takeover. We refuse to buy into the construct that the voters of the City of Milwaukee, and only the voters of the City of Milwaukee, are incapable of electing their school leaders. This way of thinking is radically wrong. The proposed legislation will deprive voters of an effective voice in the Milwaukee Public School system, and offers little hope for improving educational attainment.

We encourage mayoral involvement in the education of Milwaukee Public School students. If the current mayor or any future mayor desires to get involved, he/she should get involved. By no means though does mayoral involvement necessitate a mayoral takeover. We are convinced that school districts in this state and outside the state will received Race-to-the Top funds without the kind of legislation proposed here.

We urge defeat of this controversial legislation. We ask that the legislature considers proposals which increase cooperation between the mayor and school official, but which do not involve a plan for the mayoral takeover of the Milwaukee Public School System.



Date?

STATEMENT OF WENDELL HARRIS
CHAIR, STATE OF WISCONSIN NAACP
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

My name is Wendell Harris, Chairperson, State of Wisconsin NAACP Education Committee. First of all, we thank the Senate Committee on Education for holding this public hearing in Milwaukee.

Founded in 1909 the NAACP is the nation's premier civil rights organization. For more than 100 years, the NAACP has fought to secure the civil rights of all Americans.

I would like to address the automatic referendum built-into the legislation. Senate Bill 405 provides that if the mayoral takeover legislation is passed the citizens of Milwaukee can vote by referendum in April 2017, to return control of the school district to an effective and meaningful school board. The legislation provides that the following question will be placed on the city-wide ballot:

Shall the law be changed so that the board of directors of the Milwaukee Public Schools is in charge of the public schools in the city and appoints the Superintendent of schools?"

This provision is purely calculated to entice voters to give up their right to vote for an effective school board, under the mistaken belief that the right can simply be restored in seven years. This is a fool's bargain.

At first appearance, this provision appears to mitigate the detrimental impact on voting rights; however, the trappings of this provision can not be clearer.

First of all, we have already fought the battle to obtain our voting rights. These rights were secured by the determination and blood of voting rights activist before us. Why would we want to fight new battles for our voting rights in seven years?

Secondly, Senate Bill 405 rests virtually unchecked discretion in a single person, the mayor-appointed superintendent. Irreparable harm can occur in seven years. City of Milwaukee voters would be without any recourse to prevent harm from occurring for seven years, this is unacceptable.

Finally, this is just a bad bargain for voters. Currently voters have the right to small-district representation as opposed to solely at-large representation. If this legislation passes, voters will forfeit the right to elect an effective district representative. In exchange, seven years from passage voters may regain the right for an effective district representative in an at-large election. It makes no sense. Why wait seven years and risk in an at-large election that which you already have? We urge defeat of this radical legislation.

We encourage mayoral involvement in the education of Milwaukee Public School students. If the current mayor or any future mayor desires to get involved, he/she should get involved. By no means though does mayoral involvement necessitate a mayoral takeover. We are convinced that school districts in this state and outside the state will received Race-to-the Top funds without the kind of legislation proposed here.

We urge defeat of this controversial legislation. We ask that the legislature consider proposals which increase cooperation between the mayor and school official, but which do not involve a plan for the mayoral takeover of the Milwaukee Public School System.

Wendell G. Harris
Chair WI NAACP

Wend



SB 405? Date?

Comparative Results from the recent NAEP math test results for 4th graders. (Source: http://nationsreportcard.gov/math_2009/)

Most cities **with mayoral control** did worse than Milwaukee or only 2 points better, out of a total 500 points.

Following is a chart comparing Milwaukee to some of the cities with mayoral control. Milwaukee scored a 220 out of 500, which is below the national public average of 239. The average for large cities was 231. (The cities that did well on the test had mostly taken the test for a number of years.)

City	Math NAEP Score 4 th grade 2009	Difference with Milwaukee	Year Start Mayoral Control	Number Years with Mayoral Control
Baltimore	222	+2 points	1997	13
Chicago	222	+2 points	1995	15
Cleveland	213	-7 points	1998	12
Wash DC	220	Equal to Milwaukee	2007	3
Fresno	219	-1 point	In courts	
LA	222	+2 points	In courts	
Philadelphia	222	+2 points	Mayoral and State control	12
Milwaukee	220			

Larry Miller



John Walsh 474-445-914

~~Walsh~~ walsh.joj@live.com

SB 405?

Date?

My name is John Walsh, I am a parent of two MPS graduates, I am a member of the Sherman Park Community Association, and I participate in the Micah Education Subcommittee. But I am here as a citizen who wants the best for MPS and Milwaukee students, parents, teachers, and stakeholders.

I am opposed to the Mayoral Takeover, as defined in the legislation proposed by Lena Taylor and Pedro Colon.

I believe that the legislation:

- Would give unprecedented power to the mayor although he hasn't explained his educational priorities and methods.
- Would require a long term commitment of a mayor, who plans on leaving office soon.
- Assumes a top down approach that would leave out parents, teachers, and many community stakeholders from any role in shared decision making.
- Offers the possibility of an elected school board with only advisory responsibilities, a sure prescription for future controversy.
- Ignores the citizens' desire to keep their vote and be counted in this discussion, and in its place offers a remote referendum in 7 years.

At the same time, I do not want the Mayor, or the Governor or Ms. Taylor, or Mr. Colon or any of their supporters to be politically defeated. I would ask them to listen.

Don't we all want that elementary school child in the bilingual school to succeed, that first year teacher to be mentored to do the best possible job, and the special ed student to make real progress?

Maybe the community groups opposed to the Mayoral takeover aren't supporting a failed status quo but see a different way forward. The MTEA and the Coalition opposing the takeover have offered many specific recommendations for improving MPS.

Maybe the polls aren't wrong, as Mayor Barrett's chief of staff maintains, but perhaps the people in Milwaukee and surrounding suburbs see a different way forward.

A different way forward could be a PARTNERSHIP. The outlines of a partnership are laid out in the proposed Coggs-Griggsby legislation. It makes significant concessions to the Mayor, especially in the fiscal area, which seems to be his major concern, but allows the community to come together in support of the schools.

The City of Milwaukee and MPS need a strong mayor to bring the community together in a partnership to support the students, parents, and teachers:

- The Mayor could work with strong school board members: Bonds, Woodward, Blewett, Falk and others, in a partnership arrangement, like the one in use in San Francisco.
- The Mayor could help Milwaukee develop a "community school" approach, one which emphasizes shared decision making at the school site and the involvement of strong community partners, the approach which Arne Duncan pioneered in 150 schools in Chicago.

- The Mayor could work with Michael Bonds who shares expertise and a strong concern about the fiscal implications of rising health care costs and the unfunded pension liability in MPS.
- The Mayor could work in behalf of teachers concerning school security, health care in the schools, class size, teacher effectiveness and a variety of other issues.

Shouldn't the Mayoral Partnership option at least be considered as an alternative to Mayoral Takeover?

In his NAACP speech on education, President Obama reiterated the call for NO EXCUSES. This does not mean achieving a certain score on a math test, it means involvement and responsibility at every level: parent, student, teacher, administrator, community stakeholder. This could be achieved by a participative approach, such as the one sketched out in the Coggs-Griggsby legislation.

Surely, test scores follow the NO EXCUSES commitment.

I favor the Coggs-Griggsby approach, as opposed to the Taylor-Colon legislation.

The Coggs-Griggsby legislation respects the people's right to vote, affirms the idea of "checks and balances," and leads in the direction of a participative approach which includes all the stakeholders, with a NO EXCUSES commitment.

If the Mayor sees his role as CEO, I would ask him to consider using a "participative approach," which I have found from experience is also an effective business model.

A FINAL NOTE: THERE IS NO VICTORY HERE IN EITHER AFFIRMING OR STOPPING THE MAYORAL TAKEOVER. THERE NEEDS TO BE A COMING TOGETHER IN A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR MPS, FOR THE STUDENTS, PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.



Respectfully submitted by: Marva Herndon
5651 N. 86th Place
Milwaukee WI 53225
414-350-3027

SB 405?
Date?

STATUS QUO –

What it means to the Mayoral/State Superintendent Takeover of MPS

Definition: Current or existing state of affairs. Latin for, state in which

Genuine status quo bias can be characterized as a cognitive error, where one option is incorrectly judged to be better/worse than another because it represents the status quo. Change to the status quo typically involves both gains and losses, with the change having good overall consequences if the gains outweigh the losses.

Of course, people's emotional reactions to a choice may form part of the consequences of the choice and have to be taken into account in the ethical evaluation. However, it is perfectly possible for a decision maker to be biased in judging the strength of people's emotional reactions as resistance to a change in the status quo. Although we may be emotional, we do want change to the status quo. For anyone to assume that resistance to the Mayoral Takeover means we don't wish for our children to get the very best education possible is insulting to our intelligence. But – not all change is good change.

“Status Quo” We Wish to Keep:

1. First and foremost, we want to retain the right to vote for school board directors. It is our right and civic duty in this democratic society. Someone that can be contacted when we have a concern about the education of our children/grandchildren.
2. We want to retain the right of the school board directors to choose a Superintendent, rather than the Mayor appointing a Superintendent to serve at his/her **PLEASURE**. (Corruption is imminent)
3. We want any Mayor to continue to manage the City of Milwaukee. Specifically, directing his interest/concerns to the escalating property taxes, repairing the deplorable street conditions and most definitely bringing more jobs to the city – especially working to reduce the high unemployment rate of African-American males.
4. Retain a parent’s ability to transfer their student to another school when desired. Unlike Chicago, we don’t want to file lawsuits in order to get a student school transfer.
5. We want our children to attend neighborhood schools chosen by the parents, rather closing many neighborhood schools and then creating Charter Schools developed by mostly wealthy business faction, non-Milwaukee residents, that have no real connection/interest in our community, except for the Race To The Top funds. This places a greater burden on our children, especially as safety is concerned. Chicago is currently experiencing a high teen murder rate due to students being displaced and transferred to schools in neighborhoods controlled by opposing gang factions.

“Status Quo” We Wish to Change:

1. School Administrators having full control of their school budget. School Administrators are trained as Administrators, not Accountants or CPA’s. Budgets should be returned to MPS Central Office control.
2. Current handling of disruptive students. Open several buildings to handle disruptive students. The school for disruptive students would be staffed with Special Education teachers and School Psychologist to work with them on daily basis, if needed. Once transferred to one of these schools, a student would have to earn their transfer back to the regular school environment with good behavior.
3. We know that our reading and math curriculum has failed our students, based on test results and high school dropout rates. Therefore, we need a proven method of teaching reading, concentrating on K5 – 8. The reading program used must be consistent throughout the MPS system. No more, should there be a different method used at every school.
4. We want School Administrators and teachers accountable for the learning climate within each school and their student’s academic success.

5. Funding – do not give voucher and charter schools full payment for students attending their schools based upon the September 3rd Friday counts immediately. This is one cause for MPS financial struggles. The money should be distributed on a prorated basis, such that if a student returns to MPS, then MPS would get the remaining funds for that student.

The biggest piece of misinformation that has consistently been repeated from the beginning of this debate is “Mayoral Takeover of MPS” is required by President Obama, via the U.S. Department of Education, Secretary Arne Duncan. Please see the attached document I received from the Office of Secretary Duncan. (*copy attached*) It specifically states that “Mayoral Takeover” is not a criterion included in the final priorities of the Race to the Top program published on November 12, 2009.

Where is the detailed plan for educating our children under the Mayoral Takeover proposal? We ask you to make ethical decisions on both Senate Bill 405 and Bill 437. This means “Do Not Pass Them.”

In closing, I’m against the “Mayoral Takeover of MPS”!!!! Our votes and our children are not for SALE!!!!



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

NOV 19 2009

Marva Herndon
5651 North 86th Place
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53225-2804
Via E-mail: cherndon@wi.rr.com

Dear Ms. Herndon:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Arne Duncan expressing your concern over misinformation on the Race to the Top program. Your letter was referred to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education for review and I am pleased to respond on behalf of the Department.

In your letter you stated that your governor and mayor have argued that in order to be eligible for Race to the Top funds, Milwaukee Public Schools must be placed under mayoral control. The Department published the final priorities and criteria for Race to the Top on November 12, and mayoral control of public schools was not a criterion included in the final priorities. I encourage you to review the final priorities, which are posted at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop>.

The Department believes that mayoral partnerships with school boards have shown promise in the last decade, and we hope more mayors opt for this approach in struggling big-city districts. In many cases, mayoral control can help rally a whole city behind education and provide resources from other agencies such as police departments, parks, and health agencies. However, we recognize that turning schools over to the mayor is by no means the sole prescription for reforming large urban districts, and we are eager to work with all districts to support education reforms that benefit our students.

Thank you for your commitment to improving public education.

Sincerely,

Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, Ph.D.



SB 405?
Date?

Reforming the Milwaukee Public School System

By James Rowe

Having attended the "School District Governance Reform" program at Marquette University, I continue to be amazed and dismayed at the community's lack of understanding and effort to fix the greatest problem affecting the city of Milwaukee. Virtually everyone at the meeting talked about fine tuning this or adjusting that in order to make the Milwaukee Public School System ("MPS") more effective. I know they mean well – much like everyone working on this problem for the last 25 years – but meaning well doesn't educate kids. The bottom line is this: MPS has been a failure for at least 25 years. During this time MPS, including the City of Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin, has failed to provide an acceptable education to Milwaukee's children. Over 200,000 children, one-third the population of the City of Milwaukee, have been denied an acceptable education. During this time MPS has created \$2.2 billion in unfunded Retiree Health Benefits, which are projected to grow to \$2.9 billion in 2010 and \$4.9 billion in 2016. While I am concerned about these liabilities, which ultimately will have to be paid by the City of Milwaukee or the State of Wisconsin, they pale in relation to the significance of not educating our children. MPS is a disaster of gigantic proportion! Every citizen of the Milwaukee metropolitan area should demand that either the Governor or the Mayor take over MPS and put in place a new governance system. It will not be possible to change the culture that permeates MPS without drastically changing the system, and that must start at the top. Some people will raise a hue and cry that a takeover is not appropriate. They will maintain that we should keep our current democratic system, a system in which only 2,655 people voted in this week's school board election. This is not a functioning democracy. The voters have either given up or feel hopeless! The MPS bureaucracy is running the system. Some people will say that mayoral takeovers in other cities haven't yet proven successful. They will say there are no silver bullets that will solve MPS's problems. I agree that there are no silver bullets to magically transform MPS. However, I am convinced that while it will take time, the following steps will transform MPS into a system that can and will educate our children. First, we need an appointed school board that does not attempt to run MPS, but rather selects a school superintendent and holds him or her accountable for running the schools. The superintendent in turn must be given the freedom to select school principals whom he or she holds accountable for running their schools. The school principals must in turn be given the authority to hire and fire the teachers in their respective schools. Together the school board, the superintendent and the school principals must create a culture of high standards and expectations for themselves and every student.

This will be neither quick nor simple. But it can be done. It must be done! If it isn't done, 25 years and another 200,000 uneducated children later we will still be talking about MPS's failures and our need to do something. This isn't rocket science, but a basic management principle of successful organizations that needs to be implemented at MPS.

Please join me in demanding that either the Governor or the Mayor take control of MPS and reform the system into one that educates our children.





College of Letters and Science
Department of English

SB 405?
Date?

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Senate Committee on Education

Senate Bills on the Control of Milwaukee Public Schools

Senators:

As a parent of a MPS student, I want to register my strong opposition to the proposed mayoral “takeover” of Milwaukee Public Schools. I am opposed to the takeover attempt because I see it for what it is: as a perhaps well-intentioned but misguided effort to ostensibly “fix” Milwaukee’s education system, as yet another bandaid approach that undermines the only way to actually improve the district, which is keeping our public schools democratically controlled. As a parent, there isn’t much else worth noting about the proposed takeover bill than this, but as an educator at UW-Milwaukee and a union member, I can also remark of all these bills, that educators and unionists clearly see each of these bills for what they are: simply as parts of an ongoing privatization scheme attacking public education and answering the corporate demand that schools do nothing more than provide a compliant and exploitable workforce, prepping MPS to replace its teaching and learning models with vacuous training methods and the empty promise of economic security.

Unlike the mayor, I work in education and more fully comprehend that mayoral control does not improve the educations of the children in the district. Taking their cues from Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, pundits in favor of mayoral control look mostly at the record in Chicago, speak in terms of “fiscal accountability,” and only of “student achievement” in terms of increased test scores, which most education experts understand is not an accurate indication of learning. The slightly improved, and always only temporarily improved, performance of students on standardized tests does not correlate to their continued success in school, in the workplace and in society.

Educators such as myself are particularly concerned that such proposals include the elimination of a democratically elected school board, removing students, workers, and parents from participation in the creation of educational policy. A Milwaukee Public School system controlled by a single administrator, separated from the will and expertise of the people, and without direct democratic control will do nothing to further our children’s educational opportunities and, as has been demonstrated in other cities, will only open our public schools to further privatization and corporate influence.

Further, it has been suggested in the local media that this move is likely driven by competition for "Race to the Top" federal funds. We understand this federal program and Secretary Duncan's arguments for what they are: simply as steps toward increased privatization of our public education system; and as such, they are appalling, and no elected official should support efforts to undermine democratic processes in the public domain. It's absurd to think of a candidate running for public office working to undermine democratic processes, such as the election of school boards.

We in Milwaukee need progressive legislation that enables real reform in education, such as a bill that would fix the flawed funding formula for public education, not legislation that only further subverts democratic processes, that continues the status quo of racist profit-seeking attacks on urban public education, or rather, on Wisconsin school districts of a "first class city." I did not vote for a mayor to run the school board; I and my fellow Milwaukeeans elected our local school board members to do so.

Sincerely,



Royal Bonde-Griggs
Undergraduate Writing and Service Learning
Composition Program in the Department of English



St. Gabriel Church of God in Christ, Inc.

5363 N. 37th Street

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Lee A. Shaw, Pastor



Introduction

My name is Pastor Lee A. Shaw. I am Senior Pastor of Saint Gabriel's Church Of God In Christ located at the corner of 37th and Custer streets across from Edison Middle School that is now closed. I am grateful for this opportunity to speak.

I have listened carefully to the arguments pro and con as advanced by both sides of this great debate. I have been dismayed at the tone. The tone at times has become very hostile, disrespectful, and overly personal. I do not like to see the personal residences of our elected officials picketed for fear for their safety.

As heated as the debate has become at times both sides are together on these two points. When it comes to MPS the status quo is unacceptable and that things must change.

Neither side disagrees that:

- 70% of 10th graders at MPS do not achieve proficiency in math
- 60% of 10th graders do not achieve proficiency in reading
- Wisconsin minority achievement gap is the worst in the nation in 8th grade reading
- 2nd worst in the nation in 4th grade reading
- The gap continues to grow

No one in their right mind with good conscience can defend this lack of performance. All agree that MPS is failing our children.

A Culture Supporting Failure

I am so afraid that there exists at MPS a culture that perpetuates failure. Almost every successful organization in America that you can think of has developed a distinctive culture that is clearly and directly identified with its success. Think Wal-Mart, G.E., Intel, Coca Cola. You automatically think:

1. innovative
2. exceptional merchandisers
3. aggressive marketers
4. customer friendly
5. customer service
6. customer satisfaction
7. economies of scale
8. state of the art technology
9. visionary

Think MPS and you automatically think in terms of negativity.

- Inability to work together effectively

- Inability to maintain classroom discipline
- Inability to engage parents
- Lack of leadership
- Lack of accountability
- Everyone pointing fingers and shifting blame
- Fiscal irresponsibility
- 2.5 billion dollars in unfunded retiree benefits
- Inefficiencies of scale
- At a bargaining disadvantage with the Teacher's Union

In my opinion, like poverty which has become generational, where children are born into and socialized into the behaviors and mindsets that perpetuate the cycle of poverty, so has the behaviors and attitudes underpinning MPS's failures become generational and shapes the culture of MPS.

Why I Support Mayoral Governance

This is why I support Mayoral Governance.

- That holds a single leader accountable
- Where MPS must be an integral part of every mayor debate and State of the City Address
- Where the greatest number of registered voters will make their voices heard at the ballot box
- Where the resources of the city can be targeted to the specific issues of MPS by the person ultimately responsible for the success of MPS
- Where the Mayor in cooperation with the Governor and the President of the United States can exert the amount and the type of power necessary to change a culture of failure that is long standing, unyielding and self serving

Thank you once again for this opportunity to express my views

Lee A. Shaw



SB 405?
Date?

DEMOCRATS for EDUCATION REFORM

MAKING THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Mayoral Governance Can Transform the Milwaukee Public Schools

The Milwaukee Public Schools Are Not Educating Children

The Milwaukee Public Schools, as currently governed, are failing the majority of students in the City of Milwaukee. Low income children and children of color are the most dramatically impacted. There is no dispute that:

- **Over 70% of tenth graders in MPS did not achieve proficiency in mathematics. 60% were not proficient in reading this past year.**
- **A report from the National Center for Education Statistics shows Wisconsin's minority achievement gap is the worst in the nation in 8th grade reading and second worst in 4th grade reading, and Wisconsin is one of the only states in this country where that gap continues to grow**
- **Despite a 93% graduation rate statewide, MPS graduates roughly 70% of its total student population and only 39% of African American males.**
- **Fewer than 40% of MPS students enroll in any institution of higher education. In fact, only 20% of Milwaukee's workforce holds a college degree – that number shrinks to 10% for Milwaukee's African American workforce.**

The Milwaukee Public Schools are failing Milwaukee kids. They are not preparing them for a future in Milwaukee or anywhere else. Sadly, they are not even preparing students to read their job application forms or calculate the most basic household budget.

How can we seriously consider Wisconsin a competitor in the global marketplace when we can't educate the kids that live in our largest city?

More importantly, how can we, as community and elected leaders, look ourselves in the mirror knowing we did nothing to change the catastrophic course these kids are on?

Mayoral governance that holds a single leader accountable for the success of Milwaukee students and their schools is a real chance for comprehensive reform. The Mayor needs the ability to recruit an

- Math Proficiency: 38% gain for 10th graders from 2004-2006

NEW YORK (mayoral governance began 2002)

- Narrowed achievement gap in math (12.5%) and reading (6.4%) since 2002
- 37% increase in the number of NYC students meeting or exceeding state standards; 18.3% increase in the number of NYC students meeting or exceeding the state standards in reading
- By 2005, 57% of NYC students achieved at or above the basic level, significantly higher than the national average for large urban districts. This was a 4% gain since mayoral accountability took effect in 2003 and the largest growth in the country that year.
- New York City schools have seen a 9% increase in graduation rates. In addition, teacher salaries have increased 43% since 2003.

CHICAGO

- 15% increase in elementary age reading proficiency between 2003-2006; 14% increase in middle school age reading proficiency
- 18% increase in elementary age math proficiency between 2003-2006

Boston and New York won the prestigious Broad prize for Urban Education in 2006 and 2007 respectively, awarded to districts that see the most improvement in student achievement and decrease the achievement gap.

There are no quick fixes or easy answers to a crisis this significant. We do not argue that mayoral governance is an easy solution or one that should be entered into lightly. It is clear however that struggling urban districts, like Milwaukee, have seen results under this form of governance. If we continue to wait for a "perfect solution" our schools and our students will continue to fall further and further behind their peers. This legislation can and will work, if we all make a commitment that our ONLY priority is the well being and education of Milwaukee's children.





Milwaukee Graduate Employees
American Federation of Teachers 2169

SB 405?
Date?

2266 N. Prospect Ave. #524
Milwaukee WI 53202
414.224.9703
www.mgaa.org

Senate Committee on Education:

I am co-president of the Milwaukee Graduate Assistants Association, AFT 2169. Our union has opposed Mayor Barrett's takeover attempt of Milwaukee Public Schools since it first came to our attention in August. We see Mayor Barrett's and Governor Doyle's plan as disestablishing real democratic control of an important public institution. Our opposition is grounded in our belief that public institutions should remain democratically controlled; we recognize this because the purpose of our union, and any union, is to democratize the workplace, to bring conditions, wages, benefits, use of labor and resources under democratic negotiation and control. In this way, unionization coincides in spirit and practice with the long-standing tradition of electing representatives to public office and democratically managing public institutions. In our view, disestablishing democracy in public institutions coincides with the effort to disestablish democracy in the workplaces of public institutions. This has been the real outcome of mayoral takeovers in other cities - the roll-back of collective bargaining agreements and removal of parents and teachers from real decision-making roles in their schools.

For this reason, the MGAA cannot support Mayor Barrett or his proposals for taking over MPS, nor can we idly stand by as this effort progresses through the legislature. But we also oppose such efforts to takeover democracy because we see our union as part of a larger movement for all working people - the people who send students to MPS, the people who will graduate from its schools, and the people who must be more deeply and substantially included - not excluded - in its governance and policies.

Real reform of MPS must include parents, children, teachers, staff and the wider public. This can only occur through grassroots efforts at reform that can hold to account a democratically elected school board with real power over educational decisions.

Sincerely,

Lee M. Abbott
Co-President, MGAA Executive Committee
AFT 2169
414.469.4755



SB 405?

Date?

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

Myth #1: The MPS Board represents the status quo for a failing school system.

Reality: The status quo in American education is inequality between school districts and persistent under-funding of education. The MPS Board has been on the record for years advocating for a change in way the state funds education. Wisconsin needs to move from the broken equalization formula, that allows a school of 400 in a district like Maple Dale / Indian Hill to begin the year with \$2, 317,392 more per year than a school of 400 in Milwaukee, everything else being equal, to the adequacy-based model, which has been recommended not by one but by at least two task forces established by Governor Doyle.

What has happened? Nothing. The status quo. Question: why has the governor, the legislature, the mayor, the DPI superintendent allowed the status quo to remain in place, when our school board, along with many others, have been advocating for change?

Couple the unequal funding with the extreme poverty in Milwaukee, and it is apparent that children in Milwaukee do not enjoy the same opportunity for a free and appropriate education as children in other districts.

Rather than sit by and approve of the status quo, the Board has redirected over \$115 million in administration costs to the classroom. The Board created the Milwaukee Arts Partnership program that provides a million dollars a year in matching funds for arts education outside of the regular school day. The Board created an earn-to-learn program that provides Milwaukee youths with employment opportunities that are aligned with our learning targets.

Myth #2: The mayoral takeover will free MPS from political squabbling caused by board elections.

Reality: Unfortunately, nothing could be farther from the truth. As the scholar Michael Usdan observes, mayors "politicize the schools in self-serving ways." One need only look at New York City Schools to see evidence of Usdan's claim, but the Public Policy Forum's study of mayoral governance, *School District Governance Reform: The Devil is in the Details* shows that in almost every case, mayoral takeovers politicize school governance.¹ In the case of Detroit, for example, since the original mayoral takeover, the school governance has shifted

¹ The September 2009 number of *American School* showcases the heightened politics in new York around schools (6-7).

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

more than once a decade. In the past ten years alone, there have been three governance shifts in Detroit. Washington DC schools, controlled by the US Congress, have a similar record of legislative interference; in the past ten years, Congress has shifted governance more than the Michigan legislature has shifted Detroit's governance. That is hardly a record of stability. The moral: Mayoral control, especially in swing states, where the political power shifts, makes our students pawns for larger state politics.

The MPS discussion hardly gives cause for comfort. The backroom deal-making that preceded the public announcement hardly give one confidence that politics will lessen after a takeover. For example, at a public meeting with the Board, the mayor declared that a takeover was not on the table, but in a forum with the Milwaukee Democratic Party, the mayor indicated that he and the governor have been discussing a takeover since the mayor read in the paper that the Board's Committee on Strategic Planning & Budget voted to explore dissolving the district because of the inability to execute all the unfunded federal and state mandates (4).²

In fact, the mayor's interposition on school issues has made it harder to accomplish board business. For example, the mayor has asked the Board to delay hiring a new superintendent until the governance issue is resolved, which as the Public Policy Forum study shows, may be never. The mayor's request was then regurgitated by the editors of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. The mayor's penchant for policy-making through press releases and *MJS* editorials hardly appears to be a lessening of politics.

The mayor claims that the board changes presidents too often for sustained reform. This claim misses the mark, since the board has a clear record of stability: no matter who has been the president of the board, we have worked with and supported the superintendent. When the current mayor first brought up the idea of mayoral control back in 2003, he suggested that MPS had a revolving door of superintendents, but he had to find a new argument, since the stability of the MPS board has proved his first argument baseless.

² The Board never voted to dissolve the district, despite the story in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, which perhaps is the source for the erroneous statement in the Public Policy Forum study (4).

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

Myth #3. The mayoral takeover will heighten accountability.

Reality: The question of accountability is big, since one needs to know to whom one is accountable and for what. If one defines accountability as being for education results, then one could consult the Public Policy Forum study that demonstrates that academic results are, at best, mixed. According to Kenneth Wong and others, mayors do not "need to improve city schools – they only need to make it look as if the schools are improving."³

New York City schools all seemed to be improving, but so did all of New York's schools. Did Mayor Bloomberg or Chancellor Klein mention that the state revised its test so that fourth grade students would be tested not only on fourth grade material but half of the test would be third grade material?

The studies by the PPF and Wong indicate that improvement, if it occurs, is likely to occur in the system's best schools, at the expense of the poorest schools. Numerous researchers have observed that parents, especially minority parents, are disenfranchised in mayoral-controlled districts. Letters in the *New York Times* indicate that teachers and parents dislike the mayoral-controlled system, while educational contractors, bureaucrats, and businessmen like it. Why? Parents dislike it because they have nowhere to go with complaints or to suggest changes.

I argue that democratic elections provide real accountability for results. In the last ten years, voters have turned incumbents Bruce Thompson, John Gardner, and Joseph Dannecker out of office, and incumbent Charlene Hardin could not manage to gather enough signatures to get her name on the ballot. Isn't it ironic that when the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce-backed candidates, all of whom enjoyed the endorsement of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, lost control of the Board, the push for the takeover began in earnest.

³ Kenneth K. Wong, Francis X. Shen, Dorothea Anagnostopoulos, and Stacey Rutledge. *The Education Mayor: Improving America's Schools*. Georgetown: Georgetown UP, 2007 (64).

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

Myth #4: Mayoral takeover is not antidemocratic, since so few people vote in Board elections.

Reality: In the first place, the *MJS* and Barrett based their turnout percentages not on the districts that were having an election, but on the entire city. With as much veracity, I could point out that no one at all voted in the mayor's race last spring. In truth, about half of the people who voted in the mayor's race voted in the school board race in my district—more people in District Six voted in the school board race than voted in the state superintendent race. If you measure the turnout against the amount of campaign dollars spent and media coverage, more voters vote in school board elections than in mayoral or even presidential elections.

Note the cynicism of the *MJS* criticism of voter turnout when, during the entire spring election, the *MJS* published only one article about each district's school board race. During the presidential election, the *MJS* published front page stories about McCain and Obama every day for months. The *Shepherd Express*, a weekly, published more than three times as many articles about the school board elections than the *MJS*, a daily. The *Milwaukee Labor Press* gave more coverage to the school board election than the *MJS*.

Barrett and the *MJS* argue that Milwaukee voters would be better represented by having a board appointed by a mayor, because more people vote in mayoral elections than school board elections. The same logic would indicate that presidents, whether Bush or Obama, should appoint mayors, because more Milwaukeans vote in presidential elections than in mayoral elections. Only 27% of eligible voters voted in the last mayoral election, compared with over 80% in the presidential election. Or, to give another example, 2.5 times the number of people who voted in the mayor's race voted in favor of paid sick days. More people voted against paid sick days than voted in the mayor's race.

But why would one disenfranchise citizens because too few voters exercise their right? As an educator, I believe that we need to educate citizens who will grow up to vote. That is why I authored a civics initiative that our Board approved two years ago. In this past spring election, voter turnout was up by 20%. Students who grow up to vote will grow up to be responsible—they will show up for work, pay their bills, and get involved in their communities. Don't take the vote away; grow voters instead.

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

Myth #5: The mayoral takeover will clean up corruption.

Reality: Bruce Thompson's claim that mayoral control of schools has been good for cleaning up corruption contradicts current facts and ignores history. In fact, elected school boards were created to end city hall corruption, as Arne Duncan himself pints out in the October 2009 number of *American School*.

Thompson admits that Milwaukee has been free of corruption, a claim supported by the *McKinsey Report*, which was authorized by the governor and mayor. The current elected board has brought greater transparency than ever to MPS financial transactions, and we have brought greater scrutiny to the practice of sole-source (aka no-bid or "buddy") contracting. Diane Ravitch has brought attention to the spike in "buddy" contracts in NYC schools since the mayoral takeover.

That is one reason why education profiteers were unanimous in their support for Mayor Bloomberg keeping control of NYC schools. They knew they would lose a whole lot of business if they had to compete for contracts under a fair and open process. In Milwaukee, privatization forces are lining behind the mayor for the same reason. Just like in New York and other cities, once the board is gone, the treasure chest will be open to the mayor and city council's buddies.

Myth #6. The mayoral takeover will improve district finances, getting more money to the classroom.

Reality: According to Paul Hill, mayors underestimate complexity of school finance, which appears to be the case in Milwaukee. Although the mayor and governor authorized the McKinsey Report, which indeed points out the precarious finances of the district, the mayor has not indicated what he could or would do different from the current board.

Barrett's record on school funding is not good. Norquist allowed the Board to levy construction funds to keep up on its maintenance of facilities. Barrett refused to allow the board to bond for maintenance, using the money for renovating city hall instead, and so the deferred maintenance list mushroomed under Barrett. The result is that the Board was forced to use all of its stimulus money to reducing the deferred maintenance list.

The Board, in addition to redirecting over \$115 million in administrative costs to the classroom, has brought millions of dollars into the district. For example, the

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

MPS Partnership for the Arts, which has brought more than 5 million dollars of private money into the district for arts education in the past four years, is a national model.

Myth #7. The mayoral takeover is necessary to compete for *Race to the Top* funding.

Reality: Wisconsin state policies, enacted by the state legislature dictated by the Department of Public Instruction and administered by the Department of Public Instruction, are the barriers to Wisconsin's receiving Race to the Top funds. The "race to the top" funds are available to states, not to local districts. Of course Wisconsin should apply, but it is not local policy or governance that dims our chances of receiving a grant. State policy is Wisconsin's greatest obstacle. And the recent behavior of the state Department of Public Instruction (DPI) does not inspire confidence.

For example, the MPS Board and many other Wisconsin school boards have long agitated for dumping the expensive and useless Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE). MPS finally developed our own value-added assessments (although we still have to pay for and subject our students to the WKCE).

The MPS value-added assessment has not only been adopted across Wisconsin (such as Madison and Waukesha) but by the entire state of Minnesota and by the Dallas Public School District. In 2006, Chicago Public Schools, one of the districts held out as a model for mayoral control, adopted the MPS value-added model. Just this past year, New York City, which the mayor frequently cites as one of his models, adopted the MPS assessment.

And what has been the response of the new DPI chief, Tony Evers? Instead of following the lead of so many other districts, Mr. Evers decided to appoint a task force on assessment, one that will study the WKCE and make recommendations that may or may never be acted upon. Meanwhile, Wisconsin will send millions of dollars to California, home of the WKCE producers.

Myth #8: The mayoral takeover will reduce Milwaukee's achievement gap, the largest in the nation.

Reality: Scholarly consensus, reported in the *Harvard Education Journal* and acknowledged in *The Education Mayor*, a pro-mayoral takeover book, indicates

Peter Blewett. *Top Myths about the Mayoral Takeover.*

that the achievement gap increases in districts controlled by the mayor. Although Wisconsin has the largest achievement of any state in the country, other Wisconsin school districts have achievement gaps that are larger than Milwaukee's, including Madison and Beloit. Furthermore, Warren Simmons, Ellen Foley, & Maria Ucelli report that improvements under mayors are too often superficial, and the latest issue of *American School* reports that achievement data in New York City has been manipulated. In contrast to NYC, the MPS Board has several members who know education well and who are committed to real change and real improvement.

Myth #9: The discussion about the mayoral takeover is good because it has prompted urgency about MPS problems.

Reality: The current board is focused on the educational needs of our students and schools. The discussion about mayoral control has distracted all of us from the work that needs to be done on behalf of the next generation of students.

1. Many of MPS's partners are waiting for the dust to settle before furthering their investment in MPS. It has taken years to bring some of these partners to the table, and I worry that we may lose valuable partners in addition to the time that has already been spent on this issue.
2. Hiring a new superintendent. Even the mayor recently admitted that this discussion will make it more difficult to hire a good superintendent. Although some candidates have taken their names off of the table because of this very discussion, I commend President Bonds and the Board for attracting a solid slate of candidates.
3. The mayor and governor have expended a huge amount of energy, attention, and time to this discussion when the state and the city are facing enormous financial and social challenges. Wisconsin is in dismal condition, ranking in the bottom ten for fiscal health. Wouldn't the governor and mayor have better invested their time in building support for real health care reform, which would lessen the cost of state and local government, or to the creation of jobs, which would help our most vulnerable citizens find stability?



SB405?

Date?

My Grandson SHAUN ARRINGTON JR.
have a 3.1 G.P.A AT 65th Street
School, He is a Success in Milwaukee
Public school, My ~~SON~~ NAME IS
CAROLYN ARRINGTON, phone - 414-220-4163

My other Grandson, Christopher,
HAWKINS JR. WERE put out of Elm
Street, SCHOOL, because he WERE
being Active, but They did not
Test him to SEE what the
problam was, They Just, AGGRAVATED
his mother TIKEDIA ARRINGTON
414-315-0271, I would
have slap a 'big lawsuit
ON this school if it WERE
my child. But I could not
take the power out of her hand.

PLEASE, COMMITTEE OR SUPERVISOR
CONTACT my daughter
TIKEDIA
ABOUT her
SON.
CHRIS
315-0271



From SB 405 folder - unreadable.

My name is Moleenir T. and I work as a community organizer with Voces de la Frontera. As the youth organizer address many school issues with the youth and it is important to have a democratic elected body to go to with issues and concerns. It makes it easier to organize and give youth a voice if the mayor is in control of the district urge you to vote against SB 405 and prioritize the long term interests of youth and community over short term funding.



From SB 405 folder -
unreadable.

am in favor of Senate Bill 405. We appear to have a district under-performing in view of public
expectations. We've witnessed improvements, and for those who would disagree with me, I still maintain
that incremental progress is progress nonetheless. It is worth celebrating. Senate Bill 405, in my opinion,
offers possibilities for moving us ever so closely to where we can say proudly that all children are able to
demonstrate survival skills required of a global community. I'm not talking just about the ability to perform
well on tests for our aim must not be to produce just citizens who are excellent test takers. Curiosity,
 imagination, initiative, agility and adaptability are critical. Schools are not failing. The system is
obsolete. How are the bills debated before you framing the problem? We need a superintendent
accountable to one person, not several. These are urgent times. We are in a crisis. We know what is
before us. We are living it. I just can't help thinking that the way things are is not the way things can be.
 For hundreds of years we have maintained the status quo in the way public schools are governed. It is
 time to do something different.
 What do all the data suggest about failing schools, low graduation rates, low performance on high-stake
 tests, and overall poor academic performance? But we need to reframe the "problems." Schools are not
 failing. The system is obsolete. We need to reinvent the Milwaukee Public Schools system. To
 paraphrase Einstein, no problem can ever be solved from the same consciousness that created it.