

City of Madison
2015 – 2016 Legislative Agenda

Maintain Local Control – Decisions should be made at a local level whenever possible; the city opposes efforts to take authority away from municipalities.

Protect Property Tax Base –As more property is removed from the tax roll, it places an increasing burden on the remaining property owners.

Fully Fund Payment for Municipal Services Program –The PMS program reimburses municipalities for the police and fire protection provided to state facilities. Recent funding has declined sharply. The state should stop forcing local taxpayers to subsidize its obligation, and fully fund the PMS program.

Shared Revenue –Funding for shared revenue should be increased to relieve the tax pressure on homeowners, and the distribution formula should be modified to address the costs of poverty to a community.

Modify Levy Limits – Levy limits violate principals of local control. In its current form, the current limitations do not allow for inflation, nor do they provide room to deal with unexpected costs such as the emerald ash borer.

Increase Funding for Local Roads – Ninety percent of the state’s road miles are under local government jurisdiction. The state should increase funding from the Transportation Fund for local roads.

Increase State Transit Funding and Maintain at a Consistent Level –Given the essential role that transit plays in economic development and energy conservation, state funding should be increased and stabilized.

Reestablish Regional Transportation Authorities -Authorize local governments to create RTAs with the ability to levy a sales tax to finance their capital costs and operations.

Require DOT to provide state aid figures by September 15th - Historically, DOT has released aid figures after the introduction of the city’s budget. Moving this process up would allow for more accurate budget decisions.

Repair Adverse Possession Law - Wisconsin is one of the only states in the country that allows adverse possession against publically owned land.

Protect Stewardship funding for land acquisition – This program provides an essential means of preserving our state’s valuable outdoor spaces.

Protect the integrity of the Impact Fee statutes – Impact fees are an effective way to fund the increased infrastructure costs of development.

Create funding for addressing Emerald Ash Borer – The Emerald Ash Borer infestation has created a large and unexpected financial burden on municipalities, which is difficult to address within existing levy limits.

Clarify tax exemption for building materials incorporated into local government facilities - Logistical and administrative costs are forcing municipalities and contractors to pay taxes on materials that should be tax exempt.

Modify procedures for absentee voting in nursing homes and residential care facilities – Current rules are exceptionally complicated and costly. The city now spends about \$40 on each absentee ballot cast in a nursing homes or residential care facility.

Allow emergency absentee voting on the weekend before Election Day – Every election, voters unexpectedly need to leave town to care for a sick or dying relative. Create an exception to allow these voters to cast an absentee ballot the Saturday, Sunday, or Monday before an election if they sign an affidavit stating that they will be gone on Election Day due to a family emergency.

Allow absentee ballots via e-mail to voters who are temporarily overseas - State law prohibits sending absentee ballots via e-mail to voters who are temporarily overseas. International mail is very expensive, and the ballots often do not reach our voters in time because mail service in other countries can be unreliable. It is cheaper and more reliable to send an e-mail message than it is to send a ballot via air mail.

Expand documents accepted as proof of residence for registration - Current law lists only 11 documents that are acceptable as proof of residence for registration. The law should allow other reliable documents such as renter's insurance, homeowner's insurance, medical insurance documents, hospital bills/statements, and credit card bills.

Allow legal notices to be published online instead of in the newspaper – Given the increased readership of online resources, online posting would be cheaper and reach a wider audience.

Allow municipalities to adopt alternative voting systems – State law requires municipal elections to be conducted using the First-Past-The-Post methodology, which does not always yield the candidate with the broadest support.

Remove the Regional Planning Commission from the County's Levy Limit Calculation – The Regional Planning Commission's budget comes largely from a charge submitted to the County. Though the RPC is an independent body, its charge is counted against the county when determining the county's levy limit. This creates a conflict of resources, which has become more acute because of strict levy limits.

Allow Municipal Attorneys to Issue Subpoenas in Municipal Court - District Attorneys, defense attorneys, any attorney in a civil case, and a number of other persons can issue subpoenas by virtue of being a lawyer and having the authority under state law. The statute should be amended to allow town, village or city attorneys to issue subpoenas in cases in municipal court.

Allow Minor Property Damage to Vehicles to be Subject to Forfeiture – The operator of a vehicle is required to stop after hitting a person or another vehicle. A failure to stop after hitting an occupied vehicle can be charged only as a crime by the District Attorney. A smaller penalty should be created so that minor incidents do not go unaddressed.

Support Public Records and Open Meetings Law Reform - Current law pertaining to public records and open meetings is outdated given the modern technology. While the City of Madison has adopted ordinances that are more up-to-date, this issue needs to be addressed at the state level.

Municipal Representation on Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District – Sewer service is a municipal service, but when municipalities combine to form a district, the municipalities lose all say in the operation of the district.

Require Medical Fitness Exams for Metro drivers – Require transit drivers to have routine medical exams like those that are required for truckers and school bus drivers.

Reduce Interest on Tax Refunds – State law requires municipalities to pay 9.6% annual interest on tax refunds for entities found to be tax exempt. The law should be amended to be consistent with the interest paid on excessive assessment claims.

Allow the Use of TIF for Police and Fire Stations – Police and fire buildings are excluded from the list of allowable TIF costs, but development cannot exist without those municipal services. The inability of a municipality to finance some of these costs can discourage growth by driving up the costs of development.

Reduce Incentives for Municipalities to use TIF to Compete for Business – TIF was designed to facilitate development that would not otherwise occur, but is increasingly being used as a way to lure companies from one community to another. This leads to municipalities bidding against each other with taxpayer money. State law should be changed to reduce the incentive for municipalities to use tax dollars to compete for business.

Require Colleges and Universities to Have a Tuberculosis Control and Prevention Plan – Kansas currently has a law that requires colleges and universities to have a plan to test high risk students for TB, and notify the health department of cases active or latent infection. A similar model should be adopted in Wisconsin.

Regulate the Process of Scarification - There is currently no regulation of scarification; the state should either prohibit the practice, or regulate it like tattoos, to prevent communicable diseases.

Increase the Homestead Tax Credit – The homestead tax credit provides property tax relief to low-income working families and homeowners on fixed incomes. It should be increased and indexed to inflation.

Modify the requirements on pet licenses – The process for obtaining and renewing pet licenses should be modified to improve compliance rates.

Change the age youth are considered juveniles – Persons 17 and older are subject to adult criminal court jurisdiction. The age should be raised to 18.