

June 28, 2007

To: Madison Election Advisory Committee

From: Alder Satya Rhodes-Conway



Re: Limitations on political and campaign activities of election employees

At your last meeting, you requested materials in writing if at all possible. I apologize for not having this to you sooner, but I did want to outline my thoughts on this proposed ordinance, and the larger issue of maintaining the integrity of our elections process.

First, let me emphasize how important it is that we maintain a fair, impartial and secure elections process. I would hope that everyone can agree on that. It is also important that we communicate to the public just how secure that process is, to avoid the appearance of impropriety and to avoid any lack of confidence in our elections.

To that end, I think it is important, and certainly worth your time as a committee and our time as a city council, to ask questions about the current process and any problems that may exist; to fix anything if it needs fixing; and to communicate to the public our findings.

However, as I said at your last meeting, I am very uncomfortable with a policy that legislates against people rather than actions. It seems inevitable to me that any list we might create under such a policy would capture some we did not intend, and miss others we wanted to capture. I would encourage you to consider solutions that focus on procedures in the election process and on regulating actions rather than people.

Additionally, I am much more concerned about the integrity of our ballots than about the filing of elections paperwork. That is not to say that campaign finance reports are not important – they are a crucial piece of open government – simply that ballots are paramount. I should say also that based on what I have heard and read to date, I am satisfied that ballots in Madison are handled with the utmost care.

Finally, let me thank you for your service and your willingness to address this issue.