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Milwaukee County Leaders Issue Statements on Governor Evers Capital Budget Proposal

MILWAUKEE – This week, Governor Tony Evers unveiled his recommended 2025-2027 Capital Budget. In it, the Governor recommended the largest-ever State investment in a local courthouse project in Wisconsin.

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley, Supervisor Steve F. Taylor, Chief Judge Carl Ashley and Sheriff Denita R. Ball issued the following statements regarding funding that would support investments in justice:

Milwaukee County Executive David Crowley:

“Built nearly 100 years ago, the Milwaukee County Public Safety Building is crumbling, inefficient, and poses significant risks to community safety and justice. It must be removed and replaced with a new building that will house all criminal courts and other related functions.

“It is critical to pursue this generational investment now to improve outcomes for all impacted by the justice system, address significant safety and constitutional concerns tied to the facilities, create new operational efficiencies, and preserve the continuity of court operations.

“Partnership will be the key. Nearly 80% of Milwaukee County’s property tax levy is dedicated to state-mandated services. That’s why State investment is critical to help protect taxpayers and resources for critical services – including other state-mandated services.

“I thank Governor Tony Evers for recognizing the importance of this issue and look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Governor and members of the State Legislature to address the critical public safety needs in Milwaukee County for the benefit of our entire region and state.”

Milwaukee County 17th District Supervisor Steve F. Taylor:

“Public safety challenges must be addressed in Milwaukee County. The current situation is unsustainable, ineffective, and inefficient.

“For years, it has been clear that the Courthouse and Public Safety Building have a negative impact on the justice system at large. We see police officers and Sheriff’s deputies who are forced to spend too much time in courtrooms or dealing with incidents that could be solved by something as simple as a secured pathway for defendants that would keep those in custody separate from the public, juries, victims and family members. We see backlogs and delays caused by buildings that were not designed for modern needs. We see spillover challenges outside of Milwaukee County as a result.

“Local dollars are being consumed by state-mandated services, which prevents Milwaukee County from investing in this project on our own. The State of Wisconsin must step in as a partner with shared responsibility for addressing state-mandated public safety and courts services.

“Funds allocated in the proposed capital budget will advance efforts to construct a new building that will help improve public safety across the board. As a member of the County Board and the County’s Advisory Council on

this issue, I look forward to continuing to work with our county and state partners to implement a solution that will be good for our region and the entire state.”

Chief Judge Carl Ashley, First Judicial District:

“Milwaukee County’s court facilities are outdated and functionally obsolete. The Public Safety Building, where many of our criminal courtrooms are located, is a relic. Modern safety and justice services cannot be responsibly carried out in a building that has such significant safety and security issues.

“Now is the time to work together to construct a new building to replace the Public Safety Building. It is only with a new building that we can move forward with truly improving outcomes for all of our Milwaukee County neighbors and stakeholders who are impacted by the criminal justice system.

“I look forward to continuing productive discussions with the Governor and members of the State Legislature as well as with members of our community as we work to advance key investments.”

Milwaukee County Sheriff Denita R. Ball:

“As the Milwaukee County Sheriff’s Office celebrates 190 years of protecting the residents, workers, and visitors of this region, and works to improve and evolve our services, we do so from a nearly 100-year-old building that was not designed for the volume of people or court services that our county experiences today - volume that is only expected to increase in the coming years. Among many concerns about the deteriorating Public Safety Building is the exposure between victims, family members, visitors, and in-custody defendants. Such exposure creates a constant air of tension, and in 2024 alone, led to 852 security incidents that required a response by the Sheriff’s Office. This building, for the sake of the public whom we are pledged to protect, must be replaced. Funding from the State of Wisconsin will be critical to this effort. In the interest of a safer future for Milwaukee County, I look forward to advancing this goal with the help of Governor Evers and the Wisconsin Legislature.”

Milwaukee County District Attorney Kent Lovern:

“More resources are needed to allow the justice system to function in Milwaukee County at the highest level possible. That means additional funding for assistant district attorney positions and the public defender’s office as well as funding to ensure the facilities where staff serve our community are part of the solution rather than cause for additional challenges.

“Milwaukee County’s Courthouse Complex – which includes the integrated and interconnected Historic Courthouse, Public Safety Building, and Criminal Justice Facility – is the center of our region’s public safety continuum. As it stands, facilities create barriers to public safety and risk justice being appropriately carried out.

“I’m grateful to Governor Tony Evers for his partnership in advancing solutions to the full range of funding challenges we face – both on the staffing side of the equation and with his proposal this week to provide State funding to advance efforts to construct a new building that would replace the crumbling Public Safety Building.

“Conversations about partnership and shared solutions must continue. Our entire region benefits from investments that make our communities safer.”

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