



**Milwaukee  
Jewish  
Council**

Helpaer Community Services Building  
1360 North Prospect Avenue  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202-3091  
Phone 414-276-7920  
Fax 414-276-7902

*The Community Relations and Public Affairs Agency of Milwaukee's Jewish Community since 1938*

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Approved by the Board of Directors  
Date: January 20, 1993

Position Statement  
on the Milwaukee Public Schools  
February, 1993 Bond Referendum

The Board of Directors of the Milwaukee Jewish Council endorses the passage of the \$366 million Milwaukee Public School referendum. Citizens of Milwaukee will vote on the referendum on February 16, 1993. The referendum calls for the implementation of a facility plan whose basic purpose is improvement in academic achievement.

We are adding our voice to the public discussion of the Bond Referendum because we believe the vote will determine the future direction of public education in Milwaukee. We also believe that the passage of the Referendum has a highly significant impact in maintaining Milwaukee as a viable economic business community. It will mean the creation of additional jobs in Milwaukee.

There are over 95,000 children attending Milwaukee Public Schools. The community has invested \$104 million in a new county jail capable of serving 780 persons daily. According to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewer District the deep tunnel project is costing tax payers \$3 per thousand for 20 years. The Milwaukee Public School Bond Referendum calls for an average of \$3.14 thousand for 20 years, only 14 cents more than what is being paid for clean water. Our children should be a higher priority than jails and as important as clean water. By investing in our children today, we are investing in our future.

Furthermore, we are aware of the concerns about the impact this proposal will have on the property taxes of the residents of Milwaukee. It's important to emphasize that the enormous cost to the property taxpayers of the Sewerage District's clean water program is already half paid for. The current \$3 per thousand levied by the Sewerage District will start going down in ten years. The rate will then begin dropping rapidly, reaching a rate of 4 cents per thousand four years later. Therefore, when the cost of the MPS program is at its highest, the property tax levy to pay for

it will not be added on to the current \$3 per thousand Sewerage levy but rather will be replacing it. Thus, the net property tax rate for the capital costs of schools and sewers will not be much different than the current one.

Also, it is important to emphasize that unlike the user fees that homeowners currently pay for water and sewer use, the cost of the MPS program -- as a property tax -- will be fully deductible on the personal income tax form. Increases in property taxes have the direct effect of reducing the amount of personal income taxes owed. This should help minimize any net increases in a person's total tax liability (i.e. the combination of property taxes, state income taxes and federal income taxes).

We pledge to support efforts for more state aid for public education to reduce the reliance on the property tax. In the meantime, our community can not afford to delay efforts to improve the quality of education.

We realize that this is a decision that will be made solely by the residents of the City of Milwaukee who choose to vote on February 16, 1993. Therefore, we urge the following specific steps for citizens within the metropolitan area:

1. Congregations which are located in the city of Milwaukee are encouraged to conduct informational sessions on the referendum for their members.
2. Members of the business community whose businesses are located in the City of Milwaukee and who reside in the suburbs are encouraged to support the referendum through the activities of the various business organizations they are active in.
3. Residents of the Milwaukee's suburbs need to recognize that the future of the metropolitan area is indivisible. They are encouraged to inform their suburban state legislators that they want their legislators to join the legislators from the City of Milwaukee in supporting increased state funding to meet the unique needs of MPS.
4. The Milwaukee Jewish Council encourages all residents of the City of Milwaukee to vote in the February 16, 1993 primary. It is important that the school referendum be decided by a broad cross section of the voters. We especially call on the current and future MPS parents to make a special effort to vote in the election. We call on those who have benefitted from public education in the past to support the referendum for today and tomorrow's students.