



**Statement of Christopher Ahmuty, Executive Director,
Regarding the nomination of Ms. Ann Wilson
to the Milwaukee Board of Fire and Police Commissioners,
before the Milwaukee Common Council Public Safety Committee,
January 24, 2013**

Good afternoon.

I am Chris Ahmuty. I live and work in Alderman Bauman's district. I'm here today on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin. The ACLU of Wisconsin is a membership organization that promotes and defends the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsin residents. We have had a particular interest in policing issues in Milwaukee for over 50 years.

I want to thank Chairperson Witkowski for the opportunity to address to you today regarding Mayor Barrett's nomination of Ms. Ann Wilson to the Board of Fire & Police Commissioners. We also appreciate the attention that Alders Coggs, Hamilton, Kovac and Perez have drawn to the confirmation process.

With your approval, Ms. Wilson will be joining a board that is one of the most high profile and important in all of city government. Just as the state statute and city code have given great responsibility to the Common Council regarding oversight of policing matters, the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners, as we were reminded by the LRB's presentation is charged with many important functions. No one, including Ms. Wilson, could be expert in all the skills, and areas of knowledge that the board requires. However, she should have certain characteristics. Let me repeat the characteristics that I described in my October 4th letter to Chairman Witkowski:

- Commissioners must be willing to ask the Chief of Police tough insightful questions and demand clear and complete answers,
- They must support professional law enforcement practices and stand behind police managers and sworn officers who are doing the right things,
- They must be able to look at systemic issues not just incidents,
- If the Board continues its current functions, prospective commissioners will have to have the skills and experience appropriate to its time-consuming personnel function as well as different skills and experience giving them an ability to focus on police accountability and policy issues

Milwaukee is lucky to have its Fire & Police Commission. Still, it faces great challenges that Ms. Wilson will have to be willing and able to help solve along with other commissioners, Commission staff, and the leadership of the Milwaukee Police Department.

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Let me high-light one challenge. In my opinion the Commission does not adequately handle its policy review function. It has made tremendous strides in this area as evidenced by the recently amended Use of Force policy. However, it needs to better understand how current data driven policing strategies affect what goes for community oriented policing in Milwaukee. When you decide how you will vote on Ms. Wilson's nomination, I urge members of this committee and the full Council, to consider if she has an appreciation for the impact of police strategies on all city residents.

Thank you.

Chris Ahmuty

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1. Residents in all neighborhoods deserve effective and unbiased police service. Don't scapegoat the Bill of Rights in communities of color. [see my op-ed]

2. Residents would be more willing to work with police in their neighborhoods, if police treat all residents (even those with records) with respect.

3. The Fire & Police Commission needs to exercise its existing authority to monitor and when necessary correct police department policies and practices. The Board of Fire & Police Commissioners needs members who have the following characteristics: Among their attributes:

- They must be willing to ask the Chief of Police tough insightful questions and demand clear and complete answers,
- They must support professional law enforcement practices and stand behind police managers and sworn officers who are doing the right things,
- They must be able to look at systemic issues not just incidents,
- If the Board continues its current functions, prospective commissioners will have to have the skills and experience appropriate to its time-consuming personnel function as well as different skills and experience giving them an ability to focus on police accountability and policy issues, and

4. In these times our city needs commissioners who are committed to transparency and listening to all residents both old and young.

5. The Board of FPC needs the human resources (commissioners and staff) to carry out the several functions assigned to it.

6. The Board of FPC needs commissioners who have the knowledge and skills to assess the legal advice they receive from staff, their hearing examiners, and the office of the City Attorney.