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From: Parisi, Joseph
Sent: Tuesday, May 31, 2022 11:10 AM
To: 'nrainford [REDACTED]'; Kurhajetz, Sonia; 'carljr608 [REDACTED]'; 'amplexed [REDACTED]';
'kategrave [REDACTED]'; 'jlaraweber [REDACTED]'; 'jerry.mcdonough [REDACTED]';
Standing, Brian
Cc: #County Board Recipients
Subject: Status of Relationship

Good Morning,

In the winter of 2011, as a member of the Wisconsin State Assembly I fought as hard or harder than anyone against Governor Walker's Act 10 and in support of your right to organize. I stood hand-in-hand with the Reverend Jessie Jackson and over a 100,000 people in support of your right to have a seat at the table.

I took part in the days' long filibuster trying to stop Governor Walker's bill that eroded union rights. I fought for your right to be heard, to have a hand in shaping your destiny and that of the people you represent.

In the time since being elected Dane County Executive, I helped ensure you would continue to have a voice, by creating a structure of employee groups and a handbook process that mirrored as closely as possible collective bargaining. Dues are deducted from wages for employee group membership just as they were prior to 2011. County employees have no restrictions on the amount of employee group work they can do while paid on county time - and some of them spend significant time away from the jobs they were hired for to attend employee group matters.

You will not find a more reliable, leading voice for labor.

As County Executive:

1. I have raised wages 41% since being elected. County employees are earning 41% more now than they did a decade ago.
2. Raised employee wages 6%-9% in 2022, depending on employee classification; proposed an additional mid-year \$1,000 inflationary relief payment that was rejected by employee group leaders.
3. Ensured county employees continue to have premium free HMO health coverage with minimal co-pays and deductibles that are far lower than comps. The health plan I've negotiated does not exist in any other public sector job in this region. This health plan costs county taxpayers over \$50 million per year.
4. I created over 450 new full time positions in county government. There are literally hundreds of new employee group dues paying members today that were not paying dues a decade ago – because their positions didn't exist.
5. I created a retirement enhancement program to improve retention. Employees who work for the county receive a \$50,000 retirement enhancement after 20 years of service or \$25,000 after 10 years.

6. I created a retirement equality program – accrued sick leave balances are paid out at retirement for front line staff at the average hourly wage of a manager.
7. I created a 240 hour paid parental leave plan.
8. I created the most robust work from home program after the pandemic of any employer in this region.
9. I have increased sick, vacation and sabbatical leave balance caps.

The list goes on. I will put my record for labor up against anyone's and am proud of what we have accomplished for the people who make Dane County government what it is.

But instead of taking the template we built and encouraging other government jurisdictions to embrace the Dane County Way - a move that would actually bolster the sustainability of organized labor - you have instead chosen conflict and division at a time when all people want is for government to work and those within it to work together. You're fighting friends. And I won't tolerate it any longer.

I did not fight in 2011 for your right to slander fellow employees, manipulate objective processes, politicize the civil service system, twist facts, or engage in race baiting. The manner in which you have decided to exploit differences with management in recent weeks is in no way consistent with how this county has operated or will do so in the future. This isn't how we do business; never has, never will be.

When things don't go well in the workplace, we have well-established processes to achieve remedy. Employees can remain fully anonymous in bringing forward concerns of wrongdoing. When allegations and claims are brought forward they are always vigorously and objectively investigated by the Office of Equity and Inclusion and when appropriate the Office of Corporation Counsel is involved. Disciplinary outcomes are not issued by press release. That doesn't mean progressive discipline consistent with the civil service system isn't pursued. Let me be clear. Managers or employees who violate county policies and work rules will face progressive discipline. This administration is committed to addressing issues brought to our attention but criticizing investigations before the discipline resulting from them is even completed is not objective.

This administration will work with those who are interested in constructively addressing challenges. Those who have a desire to pit people against one another and engage in tactics more commonly seen in the state legislature, will do so on their own.

Anyone can point out problems and exacerbate them. Leaders collaborate to solve them and build lasting, legacy change. I've seen no leadership recently from AFSCME.

The overwhelming majority of county employees come to work every day with a deep appreciation for the public services they provide and contribute to. In recent weeks a very small minority have chosen - very deliberately - to exploit day to day tensions between labor and management that exist in every work environment. In some instances individuals have dug up decade old differences as justification for scrutiny today. Now, I'm fully aware there are two sides to every story and multiple people can leave the same encounter with very different takeaways and perceptions of what happened. I've done this work long enough to know the truth often lies in the middle. Managers make mistakes; there is no doubt about it. So do employees. Magnifying them in some bizarre attempt to gain political influence or leverage isn't how we improve experiences or climate.

Dane County government will not be debased to fodder for the gossip pages. In a world where a pandemic is entering its third year, the rights of women are on the verge of being taken away by the

Supreme Court, a recession nears as a result of severe inflation and global conflict, and the scourges of poverty, racism, addiction and gun violence remain ever present; we have a public that expects us to come together and deliver services. Those who want to portray dysfunction and manufacture fake crises serve to only feed public fear and distrust of government. We saw this approach for a few years; he's the first incumbent President not re-elected in decades. Can we do better? You bet. Is anything we're seeing right now actually going to make us better? Not a chance.

Those who engage in the behavior we've seen have marginalized themselves, choosing self-interest, self-preservation and agendas with no end game over the public good. You aren't fixing anything. Nothing you have done has contributed toward a substantive solution. If you're serious about solutions, then get to work. If there are shortcomings in culture remember - people make up that culture - and it takes all people to improve it.

I was recently contacted by a reporter following an investigation done by the Office of Equity and Inclusion, at the request of employee group leaders, at the Dane County Highway Department. Let me just say, this didn't surprise me because from the time the County partnered with the Urban League and Latino Workforce Academy to build a training program to create opportunity for individuals looking to support their families and in turn diversify the highway department, I heard from union leaders about their opposition.

I'm going to be clear - what's emerging from the Highway Department is the result of a small number of union leaders engaging in race baiting. People are pitting Latino and African American employees against one another, playing off fears and manipulating individuals to create tensions consistent with the complaints white highway union workers brought to me when this diversity effort was created years ago. I see the behaviors and the motives here. Unequivocally, without a doubt this is a glaring symptom of systemic racism. And it's all the more reason why initiatives like the Commercial Drivers' License (CDL) partnership with Latino Workforce Academy and the Urban League are needed throughout all of county government. White male employees comprised over 90% of the Dane County Highway department workforce prior to the launch of the CDL program. Now the department looks more like the county it serves and the work we've embarked upon is embraced by countless African American and Latinx leaders.

You have every right to not agree with a course of action or a decision of management. There isn't a single workplace on the planet where employees agree with every decision their supervisor makes. This tension and these disagreements are natural. What happens when we disagree is what defines character.

What we have seen in recent weeks is not why I or anyone else fought against Act 10. Employees have a voice, as they always should. That voice is why wages increase regularly – 41% in recent years. It's why our workers have the closest thing to free health care that exists in the insurance market and why county employees were allowed to continue to work from home while countless others were forced back into offices months ago. We know how to show our employees we value them.

I will always work with those who champion solutions and bring people together. Those who divide, are on their own. When AFSCME leaders are ready to return to the principled organization they once represented, rather than whatever it has morphed into, my door will be open.

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