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[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** And trying to survey this.

[00:00:02] **Speaker 2** We are, one of the things we do is technology is extremely important to us. It helps us solve our crime. We do have technology throughout our city in certain areas more than others because some of them are where things aren't happening as much. But we have technology and we use it well. Even from the body worn cameras to our automated lats and plate readers to our sound detection. We're not in the AI business at this point in our lives, but technology, whether it's the cell phone subpoenas that we get for our downloads, whether its the ballistic forensics that we get, technology has certainly helped us improve our solvent of crime.

[00:00:46] **Speaker 1** Mr. Chairman, may I follow up? Yes, please go ahead. And then could you also speak to open records requests and the need to read that information and how much time your department spends.

[00:01:02] **Speaker 2** Well, since our, we work real close with the city attorney on ours, we have just a small staff that does our open records request, but they've, ever since body-worn camera was introduced, our request has significantly gone up for open records. So there's a demand for them. The city attorney, which is separate from what works within the city, is just someone that's just dedicated to that. So it's that's all they do is open records

[00:01:32] **Speaker 1** So, so your department isn't engaged in redacted letters?

[00:01:34] **Speaker 2** Well, we are. We're the redacting part of it, but we go through, we work with the city to know what can be released, what should be redacted, what not.

[00:01:42] **Speaker 1** And I guess what I'm asking is, have you seen any trend in staff resources relative to that aspect? It's growing. Is it declining?

[00:01:55] **Speaker 2** He used to be one person that just didn't know we have three people doing our open records request.

[00:02:05] **Speaker 3** Next we are representing NAPCS.

[00:02:08] **Speaker 4** Absolutely. I know you, you know, the chair before you left, uplifted, you know, potentially having this big weigh-in on the timeline of arbitration. In the process of how you guys have not navigated your contract since you've been in Racine, there, yes or no, there has been increases in your pay.

[00:02:35] **Speaker 2** In my pay? Yes, sir. Because I'm a non-represented employee.

[00:02:40] **Speaker 4** In your department's face? Yes, in the right...

[00:02:43] **Speaker 2** Yes, and the representative, there has been increased, there was some agreement that they came upon. But the one that's holding them back right now is the retiree help.

[00:02:53] **Speaker 4** Got you. And that's an act of negotiation and then that.

[00:02:56] **Speaker 2** It's an act of negotiation, right, and it's getting close to the end.

[00:03:00] **Speaker 4** And, you know, both sides have been working in good faith to try and get to a conclusion.

[00:03:09] **Speaker 2** That they've been working at.

[00:03:11] **Speaker 4** Got you, and you know, take your department aside and your offices aside. When the state weighs in on your negotiation process. Is it fair to departments, whether that legislation goes in your favor or not, is it fair for departments and local municipalities in that negotiation? Or does that place a finger on the scale for one side or the other?

[00:03:46] **Speaker 2** Well, they're negotiations, so it's going to have to be, it's a give and take situation now when it comes to wages, when it come to benefits, but there's a lot of other articles that go into play when it's comes to negotiations, it all depends, you know, we're funded by taxpayers, so while there's delays, there could be a number of reasons why there are delays in, not getting.

[00:04:10] **Speaker 4** Absolutely. And then just a follow-up question. You originally worked in MPD, right? That's correct. How long were you there?

[00:04:22] **Speaker 2** Left and I was there for almost 30 years.

[00:04:29] **Speaker 4** You're there longer than I probably live, and I respect that tremendously. So you've seen, you know, several negotiations and contracts. So in 2011, I know that in the previous negotiations with MTA, The City of Milwaukee placed a standard where there was a, you know, they came to a conclusion that, hey, there will be an increase in bumping pay for officers if there's a residency requirement. And then the state came in and passed legislation to remove that residency requirement, but still kept that bumping pay, right? That negotiation directly benefited officers more than it benefited the city, my right in that negotiation.

[00:05:22] **Speaker 2** Well, yeah, well, for me, I can just speak for myself that I it was a condition by employment. I first signed up back in To live it be a resident of the city. I still have own a house in the city of Milwaukee. My daughter lives there Feel that it should be a condition of an employment. That's just my personal opinion on it I know that the legislature changed all that I think you have to live 15 miles from the city of Milwaukee proper It does I'm still a believer, that's why I say I have a, my main residence is in City of Racine. The taxpayers are paying me. I don't have to live there, I just choose to live here because I feel that taxpayers are paying me and I think it's good for all the leaders that are, that work for the city. That's just my opinion. I think you're available to them. They see that you support the city. I support the City's efforts, obviously. I want to be visible out there. I wanna be available to the people that I'm here seven per ten. And it's just my choice and I know they changed that some time ago and it got appealed a few times or appealed at least once and it ended up being that they are allowed to live in that's for any city I believe in the state of Wisconsin. They've changed the residency or they have within certain mileage restrictions.

[00:06:45] **Speaker 4** Thank you for living in the community, sir, and again thank you for everything. I appreciate it. Okay, thank you.

[00:06:54] **Speaker 3** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Chief, as with the others, I appreciate your service and your appearance here today. You had in your testimony referenced the budget cuts, previous, most local budget cuts. Specifically, you were talking about, you also represented, mentioned Harvard hours. So, where are these cuts at?

[00:07:18] **Speaker 2** The budget cuts occurred prior to my arrival. The ARPA came in during my arrival, which certainly helped out and stabilized the budgets for the city and that included in public safety. We were able to gain some positions. We're authorized 196. I'm not quite there yet, but it also helped out in the in hiring by offering a hiring bonus. But prior to my arrival, those budget cuts had, we were down, we're less than 185 I believe for authorized strength because of budget cuts and the budget freeze, you couldn't do anything else with it. You had to stay within that budget. Since I've gotten there, things have changed. I would say in my favor, or the favor of the city of Racine, where they increased the authorized strength at 196 and it used to be at 209 at one time. Went down 20 positions. This is all prior to me. But the officers are still there and these guys are they're now veterans and they're near in retirement Often talk about how it used to be and what that some of the challenges are, but obviously

[00:08:36] **Speaker 3** Would you say then you're not experiencing a budget cut situation at this point in time more of a stabilization?

[00:08:42] **Speaker 2** We're at stabilization right now through 2026. 2027 is certainly going to have an impact.

[00:08:48] **Speaker 3** So some of those loss of ARPA has been replaced or backfilled.

[00:08:54] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I think the upper funds are due run out here. I believe at the end of 2026

[00:08:59] **Speaker 3** but your local electeds can't recognize that or you expect some relief through the city project.

[00:09:11] **Speaker 2** Somehow through the city budget or some revenue sharing from the state which we did receive this past year.

[00:09:19] **Speaker 3** Okay, and then I'll just throw out, if you're willing to answer on the court system, where the pain points are for you and what you might find.

[00:09:32] **Speaker 2** Sure, yeah. Well, we have a criminal justice system. We as law enforcers, we're going to make our arrests, we can do, because we're law enforcer's of law. Then there's the next process, you know, and obviously it's through the district attorneys, do we have enough to charge someone or not? Hopefully, if the case does go through, if we don't have enough charge on a criminal case, then let's find out why. Say they do get, go to court, they get convicted, then we have the judicial system. The judicial system then says... Well, they have varying ways, even though we have sentencing laws, we also have folks that I believe feel that sentences aren't tough enough for certain, like a wrong robbery or somebody that killed someone while they were drunk driving. Then we have this bail, people are out on bail. That's something that's always been talked about. I can provide an example here. Somebody who's a violent kid gets out on bail on a $5,000 signature bond, goes out and picks up a gun and shoots somebody else. I mean, these are the things that we deal with law enforcement. I understand society. We live in a free world. And I understand things that are why people do what they do in every community, but as an enforcer of the law, I like to see people who commit crimes be accountable for the crimes they committed, and they should do their time if you get convicted. It's more kind of a hard-nosed type of guy, I'll tell you what, just the way I was raised. If I did something bad, I can assure you, my parents certainly disciplined me, and I try not to do it again, but you learn from discipline, I believe, and it's a. I can speak for some of us in this room here that we wouldn't be doing this job if we didn't learn. And probably most of us here, we learned from your discipline. You should be held accountable for the actions that you take. Unfortunately, people can take all kinds of actions nowadays, and they're not held accountable, and I'd like to see that changed.

[00:11:41] **Speaker 3** Thank you, Chief, for this moment. Thank you. Okay. Fourth right. Representative Zinke.

[00:11:49] **Speaker 5** I'll let go of my colleague's remarks. Thanks for being here, sir. So you heard earlier, I have a couple of brothers that are in law enforcement in various capacities. I have the military background myself with the United States Air Force. And for a while, I did recruiting for them. So I'm really enjoying this conversation because a lot of what I'm hearing are a lot the same challenges that the military has been experiencing as time has gone on. I just want to refer to a couple of your stats that you gave that I find concerning. So you're saying RPE received around 300 applicants per cycle, previously yes, down to between 21 and 25, approximately 100. So that's a 66% reduction in the applicant pool. The gentleman that was up here before you, Sheriff, sorry. Mentioned he didn't want to lack standards and I agree with that One thing that I saw in the military is the army and the Navy ran us netcom, which is where everybody has to go for the insurance processing and every applicant is filled out a DD form 20 or seven dash two The Department of Defense moved that from 75 questions medical questions to a hundred and sixty four Okay, so seemingly you're making it even more difficult on an already small pool. This happened in an environment where over 80 percent of kids that graduate high school aren't even eligible to join the military for various reasons. Some of which you outlined in here, physical fitness tests, psychological stuff, past medical history, whatever, right? So very similar obstacles that we're dealing with here. So I say all that to ask the question, What would be your number one recommendation for how to increase the applicant pool? Because a 66% reduction is not helping you out.

[00:13:48] **Speaker 2** Well, I think a lot of it, like I said, attributed to some of the national narrative that was going down, the lack of public structure and police and the fact that they haven't. You still have to have the law enforcement Santa Barbara has you have to meet that those With the law force in Santa Barbara by the state You have to do the fiscal Fiscal agility you have the pass you have that so 70% you have three phases of the academy You have the past each phase that is all required. Yes, go through a field training program tip We change our standards for the college credits just to attract people because some people never had their college credits. Going through the Canary alone, you got 22 credits, so you're a third of the way there. So I think that the reduction in there of having the from the 300 to 100 had a lot to do with what was going on around this country. It really did, I mean, with its social movements and protests, Ferguson, you name it. Back, George Floyd, even before that, started affecting how people looked at police, how the public looked at the police, or looked at policing as a whole. The high-profile incidents of use as a force, that they looked at, oh, police are bad. I don't know if it's cyclical, like it was in the 60s, because the 60's also had them. At that time, too, and then if you start kind of gaining more confidence in police, I'm hoping that this will pass as well, and we'll get more applicants, a large number of applicants like it once was. It is still a noble profession. You can get a good career out of this. Yeah, we still work 24 hours a day, and won't miss our house, but there are special people that do this job and do it right, and for the most part, they do it all right. I'm not saying we're not without sin. But we do it right. I just want to add a comment as well. Thank you for flying that red, white, and blue for your service. Because it's important to fly that flag. Thanks, sir. Talks about our freedoms. Thank you.

[00:16:10] **Speaker 6** Okay, thank you. Oh, yes, Representative Goodwin. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[00:16:18] **Speaker 7** It's good to see you again. Chief, I have a question for you. Kind of following up on Representative Franklin. And as far as to recruitment and some of the staffing shortages, I know some other departments, like around the country, have toyed with the idea of, or have actually did this. They've created two tiers of police officers. So you have the federal police officer, within you have a police community support officer whose powers are limited, but they have a lot of responsibilities that are focused more on patrol and public assurance. What do you think of the idea of that to address the story?

[00:17:00] **Speaker 2** We do have a community services officer, they're non-sworn officers, they may seem to deal with our parking and our animals that are running loose and things like that. I think looking at ideas like, anytime you should look at ideas, how can we help the police and help the public keep people safe? Do you need officers running traffic control? Could that be done by, like in Chicago, they'll have civilians doing traffic control that are sworn to do that traffic control. I think it's a good avenue to look at but we do have our CSOs and we have our police cadet to help with the menial jobs that are in our police department. I don't want to say menial, they're important jobs, but I mean I certainly don't wanna be trying to wrestle a dog, trying to take a dog in a chain because I try to get fit a few times. But they They're important jobs, and it's just a way that helps relief to the taxpayers, and then having what once was a traditional role for a police officer, is now done through disability and less pay, but with benefits and things of that nature.

[00:18:06] **Speaker 7** And I also have one more question for you as well. In reference, one myth maybe you could help us clear up today. I've probably been preaching this probably for the last five years. When it comes to the policing budget, I think that a lot of people do not understand the way the budget actually works. A lot of them think that officer, or let's say a detective, he comes in, he's coming in from nine to five. And that's your allocation for his budget. But then I realized that officer has to actually do an investigation. That may take 12 hours, that may take 16 hours, that may even take 24 hours. He may not go home for three days, and all of this is going into the budget, but a lot of people simply think he's just limited to like eight hours, and that's the end of it. Can you kind of speak to that? Yeah.

[00:18:57] **Speaker 2** Yeah, that is, all right, we're not like eight for eight sometimes, no we're eight, eight, 24 hours later. But that's what it that's where isn't recent and so, you know, we have to have minimum savings You want to make sure you have public safety. We have to sometimes extend we have events We have parades we have people have to work these events. You gotta get again public safety You got a you get a homicide. Well, you start at 8 o'clock But that homicide came in at 2 o'clock if that doesn't mean you get up at 4 o'Clock But those I mean and budgets we do have budget line-ups for overtime Obviously, our budgets are very limited to what we have, generally in most cities, the public safety budget is the highest in any city, I think we get about 52% of our budget. We do it for our equipment, we have our capital improvement, but we're based on levies and things of all that that are set by the state. But overtime is sometimes, and you force people, but when you start forcing people, you get the burnout, you start, but it's not usually an eight for eight, not even my job is an eight-for-eight, or any, I'm sure any of these leaders are eight- for-eight. Or even you guys. But you only get paid sometimes right out.

[00:20:07] **Speaker 7** I think that it's important for a lot of people who talk about the scrutinized departments and create these narratives that mess with the morale, that they don't understand how it works. If somebody gets murdered, that officer may be there for a while and that's increasing the budget, but you can't just say, hey, you're 85, you gotta go home, forget all this murder. You've got a budget to follow here. This is a crime that needs to be...

[00:20:32] **Speaker 2** We'll get the body in the morning. None of that stuff. It's a 24-hour operation. 365 days a week. Never stops. I think we're one of a few city entities that works 24 hours a day. I know the fire department does, but we're out there all day.

[00:20:48] **Speaker 6** Thank you for your service. Okay, Representative Madison, go ahead. Absolutely.

[00:20:53] **Speaker 4** I know we're talking about policing. I know Greg Kanell will talk about continuum of the criminal legal system and for home given on the judicial piece. You uplifted talking about cash bail and talking specifically about an example of a young person who committed a violent crime and then got out on a $2,000 bail, right? But do you believe that, that cash bail? Should exist as opposed to determining if someone is a true risk to a community and deciding, you know, if they're a risk, they stay, and if they are not a risk they are, you they're not held, right? Understanding that, you know, anybody has the potential of having the resources to pay that bill. And you know foregoing their accountability and potentially creating harm for folks.

[00:21:55] **Speaker 2** The anybody who's a risk to community based on actions that they've done and they've caught and they're now facing a bail that should be reconsidered. It's two days should be held or not and or say a bail. That's someone who's especially violent. And that's when you come up with what we call work ups, where you have all the history of that individual, all that person, and that should be considered when it comes to setting bail. Not based on a matrix of some sort, or this is the first time here, or whatever, but it should be a consideration of the type of act that was allegedly done. It should be consider. And the history that individual.

[00:22:38] **Speaker 6** Okay, thank you. Well, Chief, I want to thank you very much. One thing, just a follow up on Representative Goodwin's comments. I've often thought police departments might want to consider part-time officers. That that might fit into certain individuals. Predicaments that they find themselves in and so on so anyway just throwing that out we've got two more speakers and the next is Chief Pat Mitchell from the city of West Dallas Thank you.

[00:23:23] **Speaker 3** Thank you.

[00:23:31] **Speaker 6** Don't feel you have to take as long as Alex. I just told them there's no oxygen.

[00:23:40] **Speaker 8** Let's fall on a sleepover. Good afternoon. My name is Patrick Mitchell. I'm the police chief in the city west Dallas, which is in Milwaukee County. I am also an alumni of the Milwaukee Police Department. I will tell the committee we're going to talk about recruitment and retention. You don't have a retention issue with me. Forty years ago to the day I was sworn in as a police aide for the Milwaukee police department and I have continuously served since then. But things have changed. I heard some talk about processes in other cities and or counties. My police recruitment in 1985, 750 people entered the process. Testing in those days is in an auditorium at Madison High School, a large public high school in Milwaukee. It's filled to capacity. They hired 15 people off of that list. You fast forward to today. Look at a city like West Dallas. We are doing okay in staffing right now. We are authorized 126 sworn members. We currently sit at 124. When we do a recruitment, we will get between 20 and 30 people that will apply. We will have between three and six positions typically that we're looking to fill. But the number 30 is a false number because some of the people did not meet the minimum requirements to even apply. We're in the middle of a process right now where we're down to four applicants that tonight will have their interview in front of the final interview in the West Falls Police and Fire Commission and we started with 30. So we are down to four. We anticipate we currently have two openings, we will have at least three more retirements through the end of the year. So we know right now we will not get to full staffing. We have, in January, we'll have been the chief in West Ellis for 10 years. And we have been at full staffing for one day in the 10 years. And literally on the day we achieved full staffing, a probationary member notified us that he was going to resign. And we went right back to one down. And agency, you'll listen to Chief Ramirez talk. Even though I tell you that we're too short. It does not mean that we have 124 members of our department out assisting the public. We have about 19 people that are on probation right now, and a large amount of those 19 are either currently in the academy or they're in the field training officer process. So they are not independently doing anything for the betterment of the citizens of West Dallas. Some of the things that I would like to thank the legislature for, some of what I will talk about is funding, which has been a theme with some of the other members of the panel. Members of the legislature in a bipartisan manner. Thank you. Have helped local units of government including law enforcement over the last several years. Certainly the increase in shared revenue was a great boost for local units. It helped get us back towards the path of normal but I will tell you if you listen to how local units have government create their budgets. It is a very challenging annual process in spite of the increases in shared revenue. Public safety, I believe Chief Romero stated that. We do take up the lion's share of every local unit of government's budget. In the city of West Dallas, in the past five or six years, the city has cut approximately 40 positions. About three years ago approximately 10 of those 40 positions were human beings occupying a job late in the year where the city of west dallas went to them and said we can no longer afford your position we're going to offer you a severance package and we're going to eliminate your position so the the balloon has been stretched Our city, I'm fortunate, they still value public safety. It's always the highest funding priority that they have. But we have gotten to a point that to fund public safety, the Department of Public Works has less people to. Clean streets, maintain streets, whatever they might do. So I'm hopeful that there will still be an appetite to continue to look at how local government is funded and explore is there flexibility and what that looks like. The legislature has increased training funds for police officers. That helped. You talk about retention of officers. They want to work for agencies that can afford to send them to training and buy them the equipment that they need to do their jobs. Technology is a piece of my paper, which I know you all have a copy of. Technology, I told you, today is my 40th anniversary. So I was a new police officer in 1988. Got into a squad car in the city of Milwaukee, it had a radio. It had a shotgun, and it had lights and siren, that is it. So, the police department, if it was staffed at X number of positions in 1988, between 1988 and now, technology has grown. The cost is incredibly expensive, but it makes police officers more efficient and more effective. Ultimately, it helps us serve our community. There's technology that we pay for now. It did not exist when I started my law enforcement career, and it's not done. In the current biannual budget, thank you again for bipartisan support. Governor Evers signed a budget that allocates $4 million in data sharing, predominantly in the Milwaukee area. You will see companies, I'm going to enter into an agreement with a company that it is mind blowing the information sharing that is possible. That comes at a cost that we are struggling to pay our people a competitive wage and then we're balancing it against technology. So a part of my comments are please continue to look at what local units of government need to be successful. The final element that I'll talk about has been done briefly today. What you say matters. What the leaders of local units of government say, matters. And when you say it, is critically important. I'll give you a little bit about my background. In the city of Milwaukee, I came up through the investigative ranks. I was a detective, then a detective lieutenant, and I finally retired as the assistant chief in charge of all investigative resources. After I left the city of Milwaukee, I went to work for the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation. At the same time that the state passed a law that all officer-involved death would be investigated by an outside entity, DCI became that entity. So I already had a huge background in investigating critical incidents in the city Milwaukee. I got even more experience at the state and I have even more experience now in my almost 10 years at West Dallas. So if I am the incident commander at a critical incident involving the police, and it is one hour after the event, and I am in charge of that incident, how much do you think I know about that incident? Very little. Police officers don't make a statement until they have had time to talk to their attorney. Statement is voluntary. It's the right of every citizen, including the police, if they want to make a statement. So in the infancy of an event, I know what I can gather from body warm camera footage, perhaps in-squad footage, perhaps video that's mounted on a residence or a building, and I have minimal information from officers that may have witnessed the event. So I've already told you it's my job to figure out what goes on at a police shooting, or in the old days it was more my job. And I've told you I know preliminary details, that's it. At the same time, elected leaders are on social media condemning the actions of the police officer. And then we talk about recruitment and we talk retention and we say, well why can't the police get people that want to be police? I don't care what you do for a living, you want to be supported by your bosses when you can be supported. We don't always get it right. We usually do, a high percentage of the time. So that is the final piece if you want to assist recruitment and retention support the police when you can and If the police have done the wrong no problem criticize them look for a path forward look for improvements to the process But the time when you do that is important, and it's not one minute after an event has occurred so that is the conclusion of my comments, but I welcome any questions.

[00:34:42] **Speaker 6** Well, thank you, Chief. Questions, comments, questions?