



May 17, 2016

The Honorable Ron Johnson  
United States Senate  
328 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

As you know, Wisconsin's local units of government, including our 72 counties, are under a great deal of pressure to provide quality services, while at the same time dealing with inflexible restraints on our ability to collect revenue. This already difficult task is made even harder by the consistent stream of unfunded mandates placed on Wisconsin counties from both the state and federal governments. It is because of this financial pressure that I write today hoping you will help intervene to prevent another expensive mandate from being pushed down from Washington to Wisconsin counties.

As you know, the Department of Labor (DOL) has proposed more than doubling—to over \$50,000—the salary threshold under which an employee must be paid in order to be considered a salaried, rather than hourly, employee. This rule will undoubtedly impact hundreds of county workers in Wisconsin that will either need their salaries increased to exceed the threshold or be moved to an hourly wage, a move many employees will see as a demotion.

In addition to the dramatic increase proposed by DOL, the agency continues to ignore the vast differences in salaries and cost of living across the country. An annual salary of \$50,000 means something much different in Wisconsin than it does in New York and California. Yet, DOL ignores cost of living differences between states and adopts a one-size-fits-all approach.

Concerns about this proposal have come from a diverse group that includes local governments, universities (including the University of Wisconsin), small business interests and nonprofit/charitable groups. Rarely have I been involved in an effort with such a diverse coalition of opposition, indicating what a dramatic impact this rule could have throughout the state of Wisconsin and its economy.

If the Obama Administration is unwilling to make changes, I am requesting that Congress act to stop the rule from going forward. Whether through standalone legislation, the

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appropriations process, or some other means, Wisconsin counties are counting on you to prevent yet another unfunded mandate from being passed on to counties.

While some increase in the threshold likely makes sense, this dramatic and abrupt leap is a tremendous burden on local government and must be stopped. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark D. O'Connell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" being the most prominent.

Mark D. O'Connell  
Executive Director