

Democrat

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Wilds Opposes Mayor's Traffic-Cam Surge & Budget Cuts Affecting Needy Citizens

WASHINGTON, DC – Ward 5 City Council candidate Frank Wilds today declared his opposition to Mayor Gray's proposal to cut health care funding for DC's neediest citizens and to raise \$30 million in new revenue from traffic-camera fines.

"It was alarming to learn that the Mayor proposes to cut \$31 million in the hospitalization and other health care benefits available to more than 20,000 DC residents who rely on the health care 'safety net' of Medicaid and the DC HealthCare Alliance," Mr. Wilds said. "I commend the Mayor for submitting a balanced budget, but I believe his 'balance' is weighted too heavily against those most in need of the safety net that government must rightfully provide."

Mr. Wilds also took issue with the Mayor's proposal to spend \$5.8 million on new, high-tech traffic monitoring devices in order to collect a projected \$30.3 million in new revenue from fines levied against those accused of traffic-law violations.

"The Mayor's proposed traffic-cam expansion amounts to making the District a 'gotcha' jurisdiction – a speed trap – for the sole purpose of raising revenue," he said. "As the Middle Atlantic American Automobile Association has pointed out, the legitimate purpose of traffic cameras is public safety – deterring speeding and other violations. To look to speed-trap monitoring devices as a revenue generator is a gross perversion of how these devices are supposed to benefit our city."

Moreover, he added, "Scores of Ward 5 residents have told me about wrongful fines charged against them because of traffic-cam errors. Traffic-cam surveillance is a flawed system, and one that we certainly cannot expand solely in the pursuit of revenue."

Mr. Wilds urged Ward 5 residents to attend and express their views at the Mayor's Ward 5 "budget town hall" on Tuesday, April 10, from 6:30-8:30 pm, at McKinley Tech High School, 151 T Street NE. "I'll be there," he pledged, "and I hope to listen and learn from hundreds of

Ward 5 residents who come out to express their views about what our city budget priorities ought to be for Ward 5.”

On other aspects of the Mayor’s Fiscal Year 2013 budget proposal, Mr. Wilds:

- Applauded the commitment of funding for construction of two new middle schools in Ward 5, but said he wants much more detailed information about the location, academic curriculum, and implementation timetable for these schools,
- Tentatively agreed with the proposed increase of \$20.5 million for the Metropolitan Police Department to support a police force of 3,907 sworn officers and other MPD needs, but said he would seek more detailed information about how the funding increase would benefit Ward 5, and
- Commended the Mayor’s recognition, in his budget proposal, that the Executive Branch must do a better job of “maximizing collection of currently authorized taxes and fees”.

“Despite years of promises of reform, we still lose millions of dollars every year because the Executive Branch has been unacceptably sloppy, inefficient, careless – and in some cases, absolutely corrupt – in collecting the taxes and fees owed to the city,” Mr. Wilds stated.

“For instance, the DC Inspector General reported in February 2012 that the city failed to collect as much as \$31 million in condominium conversion fees required by DC law. If the city had collected these fees, we wouldn’t even be talking about cutting \$31 million from hospitalization and health care benefits for our neediest citizens.”

If elected to the Ward 5 Council seat, Mr. Wilds pledged to apply vigilant “green-eyeshade” scrutiny to the city budget and agency spending reports – a skill he has honed to a high level of expertise during his career as a business owner.

The Ward 5 Councilmember chosen in the May 15 special election will take office in time to participate in Council hearings and votes on the FY 2013 budget. The final Council vote on the FY 2013 budget takes place in October 2012.

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