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From: John Varallo

Attention: All Active/Retired Members

Date: 6-4-2025

RE: Mayor Endorsement

Endorsement of Mayor Marty Small for Atlantic City Mayor – Democratic Primary

The members of the Atlantic City Professional Firefighters FMBA Local 8 have endorsed Mayor Marty Small as our preferred candidate for the June 10th Democratic Primary for Mayor of Atlantic City.

Our two hundred active members and hundreds of retirees possess years of personal experience living, working, and sacrificing for the greater good of Atlantic City. Combined, these years total in the thousands, affording us a unique and comprehensive understanding of our city's history of challenges and triumphs.

The Atlantic City Professional Firefighters FMBA Local 8 is the most aggressive firefighter association in the state of New Jersey from protecting our members' rights through political activity. We are a non-Partisan association who depend on strong relationships on both sides of the aisle. We support those who support us.

Mayor Small's opponent is former UNITE HERE Local 54 President, Bob McDevitt. While Mr. McDevitt may have a vision for Atlantic City, his vision does not align with this association.

A Shared Vision for Atlantic City

One of the fundamental tenets of our vision for Atlantic City is simple: the labor force, businesses, and residents should share equitably in both prosperous and difficult times. No single group should be villainized, nor should any group disproportionately benefit over another. Local businesses depend on casinos, casinos depend on local businesses, and all require a productive government and properly staffed public safety departments.

The Municipal Stabilization and Recovery Act and Impact

For years, we all witnessed these groups targeted by one faction or another. We've heard rhetoric claiming public safety is "bloated," casinos promised "roads paved of gold," City Hall is "lazy," and the residents "don't care about the town."

Years of such rhetoric permeated the halls of Trenton, ultimately leading to the drafting and passage of one of the most aggressive anti-labor bills in New Jersey's history: the Municipal Stabilization and Recovery Act,

later known as the "takeover." This legislation was signed by former Governor Christie under the guise of "saving" Atlantic City from itself.

Five hundred million dollars of debt was amassed under Gov. Christie state monitors due to casino tax appeals. A previous deal to sell Bader Field for eight hundred million to Penn Gaming was squashed. Yet, the debt was blamed on a "bloated workforce" and police and fire contracts. Atlantic City's unfortunate financial situation was political even though it should have been addressed through standard and proven methods of bankruptcy, which would have required all stakeholders to come to the table.

Instead, Mr. McDevitt personally spoke in favor of the takeover bill at a Senate committee meeting. It was unfathomable that a union leader would advocate for any bill that abrogated contracts, collective bargaining rights and allowed one of New Jersey's most vindictive governors to fire employees at will, without cause or reason and protected big business and scapegoated the city's employees. Make no mistake, this bill was predominantly aimed at the police and fire, and Mr. McDevitt knew it.

We endured years of drastic pay cuts, increased work hours, and multiple attempts to lay off our members. One failed lay off attempt was five days before Christmas and attached was an additional 11% pay cut. We grappled with line-of-duty deaths, suicides, and life-debilitating injuries, all while benefits were cut from those members. This is what Bob McDevitt signed up to publicly support.

Progress Under Mayor Small

Today, FMBA Local 8 has successfully fended off those attacks. We restored civil service, collective bargaining rights, replaced every piece of front-line apparatus, renovated four of six firehouses, lowered work hours, and are operating under a fair contract. Key positions critical to life and safety have been restored, we have increased suppression staffing and returned an additional engine company to service. All this progress has occurred under the Mayor Small.

There is much more work to do. We need a mayor who is willing to protect one of our most important divisions: fire prevention as well as RESTORE ENGINE 4. We truly believe our progress could be impeded by Mr. McDevitt.

In Solidarity,

John Varallo

