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**OAPS CALLS ON MAYOR, COUNCIL TO THROW OUT CURRENT FIRE
UNION CONTRACT, HIRE NEW NEGOTIATION TEAM FOR CITY
Group Questions Management Decisions by Current Fire Department Leaders**

(Omaha, NE) – The Omaha Alliance for the Private Sector (OAPS) today said that the City of Omaha has lost control over the management of Omaha’s Fire Department and called on Omaha’s Mayor and City Council to throw out the current Fire Union Contract and hire a new negotiating team. The Omaha Alliance made the request at a news conference at the Omaha Press Club Wednesday morning.

“Over the past two decades, through several administrations and city councils, and through several leaders of the Omaha Fire Union, the authority to regulate Omaha’s Fire Department has been methodically – and, we assume, intentionally – shifted from Omaha’s city ordinances into the Fire Union Contract itself,” said David Nabity, spokesman for OAPS. “This was by no accident.”

“The Fire Union Contract approved in 2007 continued this process of taking the power away from the Mayor, the City Council, the Fire Chief – and the people of Omaha themselves – and locking it into the Fire Union Contract where, once approved, can not be changed until a new contract is negotiated. Not by ordinance, not by petition of the people, perhaps not even by a directive of the Office of Homeland Security,” Nabity said.

“No one who negotiated the 2007 contract should be involved in any current or future negotiations for the city, especially if they were ever a member of the fire union. The Omaha Alliance for the Private Sector calls upon the Mayor and the City Council to appoint an independent negotiator to stand for the taxpayers’ best interest; Someone who knows how to interpret these legal contracts and someone who receives no personal benefit either directly or indirectly from these negotiations,” Nabity said.

Rick Bettger, Board Secretary for OAPS, mentioned several provisions in the current union contract that are unrealistic in today’s economy. Bettger pointed out that Omaha’s Fire Union Contract contains 171 pages full of provisions that tie the hands of management and prevent the city from taking reasonable steps to reduce costs during a

city budget shortfall. Bettger noted that Des Moines' contract is only 32 pages, St. Paul has 37 pages and Lincoln's Fire Union Contract is only 55. All of these cities are included on the state's "comparable" list from the Commission for Industrial Relations. Bettger pointed out that it is clear Omaha's Fire Union Contract is micromanaging the Fire Department and preventing any real reforms or budget cuts from taking place.

"These provisions show some of the parts of this contract that just don't measure up to the current economic reality being faced by Omaha's citizens or by the stresses being placed on Omaha's city budget and Omaha taxpayers," Nabity said. "Fire Department management has not embraced the recent Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) ruling that allows them to make staffing and management changes. It's common knowledge that the Fire Department is \$4 million over budget. With the CIR ruling, the Fire Department could have made the changes necessary to bring the Fire Department in within budget. This demonstrates that Fire Department leadership has not made genuine efforts to cut inefficiencies and redundancies in the department. And that can no longer be tolerated.," Nabity said.

"The Omaha Alliance for the Private Sector is asking the citizens of Omaha to say 'enough is enough.' Call the Mayor and your City Council representative and tell them to start over. Start over with this contract by replacing the current negotiation team, engage an independent negotiator and force the management changes within the Fire Department that will save significant tax dollars."

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