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CONTACT: David Nabity
(402) 618-6759

**OMAHA ALLIANCE POINTS OUT FIRE DEPARTMENT MISMANAGEMENT
Department Mismanagement Costs Omaha Taxpayers Millions; Calls for Action**

(OMAHA, NE) – The Omaha Alliance for the Private Sector today released more results from their research and investigation of the Omaha Fire Department showing that mismanagement of the department is costing Omaha taxpayers millions of dollars. The Omaha Alliance for the Private Sector (OAPS) announced its findings at a news conference at the Omaha Press Club.

“The Fire Department management team has needlessly caused the Omaha Fire Department to be \$4.7 million over budget just this year alone,” said David Nabity, OAPS Treasurer and spokesman. “It is our hope that by making public what we have already discovered, it will help our city officials better understand why it is important to *start over* on the negotiation process for a new fire union contract by using independent negotiators. We also hope that the citizens will finally say enough is enough and outraged enough to demand real reform within the Fire Department,” Nabity said.

The OAPS released numerous instances where mismanagement is costing taxpayers unnecessary dollars. Among the findings:

1. The executive office of the department is severely over staffed with unbudgeted positions costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands annually.
2. A year ago, 18 firefighters were hired to staff a new Elkhorn suburban firehouse that has not even been built. The annual cost of these positions exceeds \$1,350,000.
3. Since the current management team has been in charge, staffing has significantly increased beyond the true needs of the department to maintain firefighter and public safety. Approximately 15% of the workforce is not working on a daily basis costing possibly over \$6,000,000 annually.
4. Specific individual firefighters are receiving “out of class” pay above what they are entitled to in the Omaha Fire Union contract costing taxpayers countless dollars.
5. The department allows a system that fosters poor accountability of a select group of firefighters’ through “detached duty status” making their whereabouts at any given time difficult to determine which causes confusion, overstaffing and bloated payroll costs.
6. Lax management of firefighter status may result in firefighters getting paid as working while they are on vacation.
7. Recently, many lower-waged civilian staff members were fired and replaced by uniformed firefighters who are paid double the wages costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

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8. Today, there is one captain for every three firefighters, and those assigned to positions above the rank-and-file firefighter represent 40% of the department costing taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.
9. The department applied for and was awarded a federal grant based on staffing requirements that weren't met, yet the city took monies from the grant reserve in violation of the federal laws governing that grant.
10. Mismanagement of the Kloewer [pronounced: "KLAY-ver"} Memorial fund: We have reason to believe the City was overcharged by \$59,000 for heart monitor equipment purchased from Zoll Medical Corporation. The total bill for these Heart Monitors is \$423,117. The department raised \$299,000 from donors for this equipment leaving a balance due of \$124,117 and yet the city is being billed \$183,117 in four annual installments to pay the balance due, a \$59,000 disparity.
11. It appears that funds allocated for a fire suppression system within fire department headquarters were redirected to build an office for the fire chief which created an unbudgeted expense of over \$400,000.

The OAPS also pointed out some instances where it appears Fire Department management has ignored the current union contract or not acted properly on rulings from the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) that would have allowed for proper management and lowering costs. Those are:

12. Fire Department management, contrary to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, misused "Call Back" and overpaid firefighters \$1,200,000 over the last three years.
13. Lax rules and mis-accounting of "comp time" resulted in many receiving time and a half on their wages allowing some firefighters to "spike" their income and increase their pensions by more than 30%.
14. There are now 45 captains on ambulances – even though the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) recently stated clearly that these captains are not needed on the ambulances – costing Omaha taxpayers up to \$1 million annually.

"Because of these findings, the Omaha Alliance for the Private Sector – on behalf of the taxpayers of Omaha – calls on City leaders to launch an independent financial audit of fire department operations by inviting the Nebraska State Auditor to review all activity within the Fire Department," Nabity said. "In addition, we call on City Leaders to ask for a legal investigation with the City Attorney and the U.S. Attorney to study all of the activity within the department that may be in violation of city, state and federal laws."

"Finally, we ask the citizens to engage in this process by calling the Mayor and the City Council and ask them to complete a thorough financial and legal investigation of the Fire Department and begin the process of making Fire Department management more responsible to the citizens of Omaha who pay for the bloated Fire Department budget," Nabity said.