

Assembly Dems elect Hintz minority leader

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Fresh off his election as Assembly minority leader, Rep. Gordon Hintz challenged his fellow Dems Tuesday to “recommit to the effort necessary to change the direction of Wisconsin.”

Hintz, D-Oshkosh, was elected to the post after Dems pushed out Rep. Peter Barca, who will step down on Sept. 30. Hintz will take over Oct. 1.

Following his election, Hintz said not all members have been “tuned into” the collective effort to get out of the minority. He said every minute spent on things that divide the caucus takes time away from holding Republicans responsible.

He also hinted at the commitment Dems need to make to the caucus politically, saying everyone has a “contribution to meet” but it is hard to do if they’re worried colleagues are going to try undermining them via primaries in “some sort of purity test.”

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“We only have 35 members and unless all 35 of us are on the same page, we will not be an effective voice for Democrats across Wisconsin,” Hintz said.

Hintz, 43, was unopposed for the minority leader’s post. Rep. Gary Hebl, D-Sun Prairie, made a motion to elect the new minority leader via unanimous consent. But Rep. Christine Sinicki, D-Milwaukee, objected. She had backed Barca and was critical of what she said were young members of the caucus that pushed him out.

Hintz has been a key Assembly Dem voice on the budget and other issues through his seat on the Joint Finance Committee. He considered challenging Barca for minority leader after the November elections, but passed, citing the pending birth of

his first child.

He also faced a difficult re-election in 2014 as Republicans targeted him over a 2011 citation at a massage parlor that was later shut down for prostitution as well as for him yelling, “You’re (expletive) dead!” at then-GOP Rep. Michelle Litjens during the floor debate on Act 10.

Republicans have been critical of both, and state GOP spokesman Alec Zimmerman accused Hintz of conducting a personal war on women.

“Wisconsin families can’t trust that Gordon Hintz even respects them, let alone that he’ll fight for them,” Zimmerman said.

Hintz addressed the criticism in his speech to members, saying he was an “unhappy person in a bad place in my life” and engaged in “destructive behavior” at the time. He said he apologized and took responsibility for his actions, never stopped doing his job and did not hide from the public.

He noted he got married three years ago, bought a house two years ago and had a daughter earlier this year.

“While I can’t change the mistakes of my past, I can continue to learn from them going forward,” Hintz said, adding he hoped Tuesday’s vote meant the caucus is supporting the person he has become.