

Erin Grunze: Wisconsin Elections Commission needs to be run by the best administrators

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It is troubling to see the John Doe investigations and fallout back in the news as it has escalated to the point where legislative leaders are calling for Elections Commission Administrator Mike Haas and other officials to resign, despite no accusations of wrongdoing or any recommendation by the DOJ for their resignation.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin trust the bipartisan Wisconsin Elections Commission to be able to evaluate their staff and make decisions about their ability to maintain nonpartisanship of our elections.

Under Haas' leadership, the Elections Commission has successfully administered the 2016 statewide presidential recount, implemented online voter registration, provided training for clerks across the state on changes in election law, and implemented a new statewide voter database and election administration system. The League has interfaced with Mr. Haas and other WEC staff in our voter service work and always found them to be helpful, nonpartisan, and highly professional.

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Heading into an election year our hope would be that lawmakers be concerned with how to support the Wisconsin Elections Commission in running accessible and fair elections. They can do that by restoring the needed staffing which the Governor cut in the state budget. They certainly will not improve elections by stripping the agency of its leadership at a critical time. Bringing a partisan dispute to a bipartisan

commission that has been functioning well harms the reputation of the Wisconsin Elections Commission in a time when it is working to address the real challenges with election security, how to implement new and evolving technology, and educating voters so they can understand and comply with the many changes in voting laws.

Our commitment to an adequately funded Wisconsin Elections Commission with strong leadership has only grown stronger in the face of recent challenges. Faith in our election system is a bedrock of democracy. We need to work on strengthening voter confidence in the system, so that citizens feel, as they rightly should, that their vote matters and will be counted. Casting doubt on the process, by unduly trying to dismantle the leadership of the agency responsible for running our elections, is not keeping voters' interests at heart. It harms the whole system.

Call off the attack on the Elections Commission and Ethics Commission staff who are not implicated in the recent DOJ report and let them do their jobs.

- Erin Grunze is the executive director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.