

Four African-American lawmakers push for 'proper representation' on new task force

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Four African-American lawmakers today made a push to add a black voice to a task force that will study the possibility of building a new prison after Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, did not include any Dems among his appointments.

Milwaukee Dem Reps. David Bowen, David Crowley, Jason Fields and Leon Young, all of whom are African-American, today asked Vos for "proper representation" on the task force.

"Given the high level of racial inequality that is found in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, it is imperative that any task force created to study the feasibility or necessity of new prisons being built have African American representation," the four lawmakers wrote in their letter to Vos, adding each of them would be willing to serve if given the opportunity.

Nearly 43 percent of the adult male population in Wisconsin prisons' last year was African-American, according to the Department of Corrections, while nearly 21 percent of the female population was. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated about 6.6 percent of Wisconsin's overall population was African-American in 2016.

Vos' office did not immediately respond to requests for comment today.

Bowen also sent a letter to Scott Walker asking the gov to consider the state lawmaker for one of his picks to the task force, which was created in the 2017-19 budget.

A spokesman for the gov said he was working on his picks for the commission.

"We will work to ensure a broad range of expertise when making these

appointments,” Tom Evenson said.

The budget allocated \$600,000 for a long-range master plan for Department of Correction facilities directed by a nine-person committee. Walker was given three picks, one of whom will serve as chair, while Vos and Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, R-Juneau, were to jointly appoint six lawmakers. The commission is directed to turn in a report by Sept. 15.

Fitzgerald appointed Sens. Dan Feyen, R-Fond du Lac; Van Wanggaard, R-Racine; and La Tonya Johnson, D-Milwaukee.

Vos appointed GOP Reps. Mark Born, of Beaver Dam; David Steffen, of Green Bay; and Michael Schraa, of Oshkosh.

Of the six lawmakers, Johnson is the only African-American.

Read the lawmakers’ letter to Vos:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/171115VosLetter.pdf>

Read Bowen’s letter to Walker:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/171115Walkerletter.pdf>