

One Wisconsin Now: Defense Attorney or District Attorney?

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MADISON, Wis. — A sleazy last minute budget deal between Gov. Scott Walker and three right wing Republican State Senators, including Duey Stroebel of Ozaukee County, has, as reported by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, raised legal questions and drawn a request for an investigation from One Wisconsin Now.

Ozaukee County District Attorney Adam Gerol, in a seven page reply letter to One Wisconsin Now, mounted a strident defense of the actions of Duey Stroebel, his own state Senator. In their reply to Gerol's screed, One Wisconsin Now noted that Mr. Gerol was acting more like a defense attorney for Stroebel, to whom he has made campaign contributions, than the District Attorney for the people of Ozaukee County.

One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross wrote:

“It is reasonable to expect state legislators to follow state law. And it is reasonable to expect public servants such as yourself, responsible for ensuring people of all political affiliations are held accountable under the law act accordingly, and not as a de facto defense attorney for a political party or partisan politician to whom they donate.”

When Gov. Walker signed the 2017-19 state budget, he used his partial veto power to strike several budget items to satisfy several of the demands of the holdout

legislators. But Walker also took a separate action outside of the budget bill, which he highlighted in the same press release, signing an executive order effectively implementing a policy provision contained in another bill authored by Sen. Kapenga and sponsored by Senators Nass and Stroebel. The GOP trio responded with a press statement thanking Gov. Walker for his “cooperative approach” in meeting their demands.

One Wisconsin Now submitted evidence to the Dane County District Attorney, asking for an investigation of whether or not a state law that prohibits legislators from agreeing to vote for a bill in exchange for other actions by a governor was violated. As a courtesy, a copy was provided to the District Attorney of the county of residence of each of the Senators, including Mr. Gerol in Ozaukee County.

Ross’ letter concluded:

“... the people of Wisconsin deserve to know whether their elected leaders in the State Capitol have broken the law. I would have hoped for the sake of open, transparent and ethical government in Ozaukee County that the District Attorney would share that sentiment, it appears that is not the case with the current occupant of that office.”