

Rep. Hesselbein: Assembly Democrats circulate Bill to counter Speaker Vos's overtly partisan task force selections

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Madison – Yesterday, a report by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel highlighted a decision made by Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester) to exclude members of the Assembly Democratic Caucus from a task force that will study the future of correctional facilities in Wisconsin. This decision sits at odds with the Speaker's counterpart in the State Senate, who appointed Sen. LaTonya Johnson (D-Milwaukee) to the task force and breaks with standard legislative practice.

To counter Speaker Vos's overtly partisan decision to ignore the voices and ideas of members of the Assembly Democratic Caucus, a group of Assembly Democrats have introduced legislation that would statutorily require both majority and minority members of the legislature be named to any committee or task force that is formed when it includes members of the legislature.

Assistant Democratic Leader Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) and Representative David Bowen (D-Milwaukee), the ranking-Democrat on the Assembly Committee on Corrections, released the following statements regarding the introduction of the legislation:

“The creation of task forces and study committees are supposed to bring a broad cross-section of lawmakers, stakeholders, and concerned citizens together to solve

real problems facing our state,” Hesselbein said. “Speaker Vos’s decision to exclude members of the Assembly Democratic Caucus from a task force that aims to analyze what the future of our correctional system will look like is a disservice to not only the members of our caucus, but the communities they serve.”

Rep. Bowen added, “Speaker Vos’s blatantly-partisan decision to ignore members of our caucus and appoint three male, Caucasian members to this task force ignores the values of inclusion and voices of so many Wisconsin citizens that will be affected by any changes we make to our state’s correctional system. We need diverse voices advocating for reform that will lift up all Wisconsin communities as we work to make our state safer and address racial inequality that currently plagues our criminal justice system. It is essential that representatives from not just our side of the aisle, but also communities of color are included on this task force to advocate for their constituents.”