

Rep. Taylor: Republican Leaders continue their retaliatory campaign against corruption probes

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MADISON – This week, Republican leaders signaled their continuation of a retaliatory campaign against public officials and entities involved with several corruption investigations. Leaked documents to The Guardian newspaper revealed that one of these investigations, commonly referred to as John Doe II, uncovered an intricate scheme of typically illegal campaign collusion between Governor Scott Walker and a so-called “independent group,” the Wisconsin Club for Growth, during the recall elections. The leaked documents show how Governor Walker evaded long-established campaign finance laws prohibiting candidates from receiving direct or indirect corporate campaign contributions. This investigation was cut short by the conservative majority on the state Supreme Court that ignored established state and federal campaign finance law.

After a year of investigating the source of these leaked documents, Attorney General Brad Schimel recently revealed, in an 88-page right-wing rant, that he found no specific leaker nor any criminal conduct. Nonetheless, Attorney General Schimel is now urging a court to hold various public officials involved with the investigation in contempt. Meanwhile, Republican legislative leaders have called for a group of public officials, most of whom had little or nothing to do with the John Doe II investigation, to resign from their positions at the newly formed Ethics and Elections Commissions.

In response, Rep. Chris Taylor issued the following statement:

“I continue to be disgusted by the blatant political attacks that Republican leaders are launching against public servants trying to do their jobs, while ignoring the underlying unlawful conduct that necessitated these corruption investigations in the first place. Wisconsin’s ban on candidates from receiving corporate donations either directly or indirectly has been in place since 1905. Pay-to-play politics has been illegal since the founding of our state. Republican leaders should be alarmed that these practices were uncovered in the John Doe II corruption investigation. Instead, they are absolutely fixated on shielding themselves from public accountability measures, corruption probes and punishing those involved in this lawful, bipartisan investigation.

“Make no mistake – Their actions are intended to send a message that anyone or any entity that dares investigate them better think twice. Republican legislators have already dismantled the Government Accountability Board, an independent watchdog agency designed to fight political corruption, shielded themselves from being investigated in secret corruption probes, and opened the flood gates to more corruption and corporate cash in our elections. Now they are entirely focused on intimidating and silencing public servants at the Election and Ethics commissions in advance of an election cycle that is already seeing heavy expenditures by corporate interests.

“Meanwhile, Attorney General Schimel’s witch hunt against nine public officials continues, with his bizarre request that they be held in contempt of court without any specific evidence of wrong doing. Yet he refuses to pursue any sanctions against known conservative leaker Eric O’Keefe, who admittedly and unlawfully leaked information about the corruption probe to various newspapers. To top it off, the Attorney General himself leaked confidential information about a now closed investigation.

“These disgraceful efforts of Republican leaders to silence public officials who had nothing to do with these investigations and to unjustly penalize those who did must be vigorously resisted. The public deserves a government that is accountable to the people rather than a government that squashes accountability measures designed to keep elected officials honest, ethical and law-abiding.”