

One Wisconsin Now: Boss Vos paying caucus member Kerkman for side businesses the last five years

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Unpublicized Arrangement Raises Enormous Red Flags

MADISON, Wis. — Republican Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has been employing and paying fellow Republican member and Assembly Majority Sergeant at Arms Rep. Samantha Kerkman through his network of private businesses going back to 2013, according to a One Wisconsin Now review of legislative Statements of Economic Interests. Public records show Kerkman has been paid by Vos undisclosed sums for the years 2014-2017 by Vos's [Whitewater College Rentals](#) and in 2013 by Vos's [Troystar Packaging](#).

Any payments for 2018 would not be disclosed until 2019 and only if Kerkman wins re-election in November. Vos created Whitewater Rentals January 7, 2011, right after the Republicans seized control of state government and he was made chair of the budget-writing Joint Finance Committee. Vos is in the middle of his seventh term in office. Kerkman voted with Vos in favor of all five major pieces of pro-landlord, anti-tenant legislation before the Assembly since Republicans took control.

"Boss Vos has Samantha Kerkman on his payroll and in his pocket," said Scot Ross, One Wisconsin Now Executive Director. "Kerkman's been in office nearly 20 years. It's just like 25-year career politician Scott Walker — these Republicans get into office, get some power and they change because they no longer think the rules apply to them anymore."

Vos made headlines earlier this year with his ties to Cliff Rosenberg, the disgraced Republican former Ohio House Speaker. Rosenberger was the best man at Vos's third wedding and is currently under FBI investigation for selling off favors to the payday lending industry for trips he and Vos took together.

Ross noted that since Vos became speaker and Kerkman went on his payroll, she has voted with him an astonishing 99.2 percent of the time, according to a review of Assembly roll call votes for 2013-2017.

"Usually we hear about Republican politicians being bought off by special interests," said Ross. "Now the Republicans are buying off each other."

The practice raises enormous red flags about Vos in making the arrangement and whether Kerkman is beholden to Vos or her constituents. Kerkman's Statements of Economic Interests listing Vos's companies as her employer are available in her filings in years [2014](#), [2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#) and [2018](#).

In addition to the income she has received from Vos that began right after his ascension and throughout the entirety of his tenure as Assembly Speaker, Kerkman is also listed as the chair of a 501c3 organization "We Back the Badge, Inc." which she created in August 2016 and is the registered agent for, according to the [Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions](#).

[A review of IRS records](#) which only exist for Kerkman's organization for 2016, show the organization raised \$61,806 and spent \$51,658. Kerkman's Statement of Economic Interests for that year shows no specific accounting for any of the contributions she received for the organization, nor any expenditures. It does list a gift "over \$50" from an "Amy Maurer." An Amy Giles-Maurer is listed as Secretary of We Back the Badge.