

One Wisconsin Now: Michael Screnock's special ethical conflict

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MADISON, Wis. — Gov. Scott Walker's refusal to call elections to fill vacancies he created by appointing the legislators to positions in his administration in December 2017 has triggered a recently-filed lawsuit in Dane County Circuit Court. One Wisconsin Now Research Director Joanna Beilman-Dulin said state Supreme Court candidate Michael Screnock's conflicts of interest mean he should excuse himself from hearing the case, should he be elected and the litigation over Walker's malfeasance come before him.

"Michael Screnock helped Gov. Walker manipulate the rules to give Republicans a partisan political advantage when he worked as Walker's attorney," commented Beilman-Dulin. "He shouldn't be able to do it again if he were to be elected to the state Supreme Court."

Michael Screnock was a hired gun attorney for Scott Walker's campaign, arguing in court on his client's behalf to try to delay the 2012 gubernatorial recall election. In addition, Screnock was part of the legal team who helped draw state voter districts that were so political and partisan that they were declared unconstitutional by a federal court. Judicial ethics caution judges from participating in cases involving former clients and issues on which they argued for one side.

Gov. Walker has refused to abide by state law that requires him to call special elections to fill state legislative vacancies occurring before April of an election year.

The resignations of the legislators previously representing the 42nd Assembly District and the 1st Senate District occurred in December 2017, well before the statutory deadline for calling elections.

Beilman-Dulin said Gov. Walker fears embarrassing electoral losses in the lead up to his November election bid, even though the races would be run in the districts rigged by Screnock and the Republican legal team.

The lawsuit challenging Walker's attempt to subvert democracy has been filed in Dane County Circuit Court by a group formed by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder.