

One Wisconsin Now: Robin Vos' Free European Vacation Leaves Unanswered Questions

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Same Trip Triggered Resignation of Speaker of Ohio House of Representatives, Allegedly Part of FBI Probe of Lawmaker

MADISON, Wis. — The Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives is under investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and has resigned his position, in part, because of his acceptance of a trip to London, England paid for by a conservative political organization in association with a payday loan lender. Meanwhile in Wisconsin, his traveling companion Assembly Speaker Robin Vos has alleged his participation in the same trip was on the ethical up and up. One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross said Vos' fantastical claim raises even more questions that must be answered about his already shady relationship with the payday loan industry.

“Winston Churchill said, ‘You must look at the facts, because they look at you.’ This looks like a dirty deal and we’re looking at you, Robin Vos,” commented One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross. “The Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives is under federal investigation and resigning over this trip while in Wisconsin his travelling companion Robin Vos is filibustering with stories about his dinner companions,”

According to media reports, the trip in question was paid for by the conservative GOPAC education fund and included lobbyists for a payday loan company that does business in Wisconsin. Principals in the business and their family members have donated generously to Vos' Assembly Republicans, especially in races critical to keeping Republicans, and Vos, in charge of the chamber.

For his part, Vos has shown his gratitude to the industry for their financial support by seeking to limit regulation of payday lenders and make it easier for them to do business in Wisconsin.

Among the unanswered questions creating a darkening ethical cloud hanging over Vos are:

Who paid the travel expenses for Vos' fiancée? Vos has told the media that the travel expenses of his then fiancée and now wife who accompanied him on his European junket were not paid by GOPAC. But, Vos has refused to identify who picked up the tab or to deny that her travel expenses were paid by a party or parties associated with the payday loan industry.

How much has the payday loan industry contributed to the Jobs First Coalition? The Jobs First Coalition is a conservative dark money group that has spent almost exclusively to boost the campaigns of Republicans running for the State Assembly. Between 2014 and 2016 the group has raised \$3.5 million and employs Vos' wife as a fundraiser, paying her \$235,000 for her labor.

If no business was discussed, why were there multiple lobbyists for the payday loan industry on the trip? Vos alleges that two payday loan industry lobbyists, whose job is to advocate for the industry that pays them to lobby, did not discuss business over their multi-day European junket with top legislators from the states of Ohio and Wisconsin, states where their client has operations.