

Courtney resigning as state GOP chair effective today

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Brad Courtney, who had agreed to continue on as state GOP chair on an interim basis while the party assessed what went wrong in 2018, is resigning effective today.

Courtney sent the state party's Executive Committee and county chairs letters informing them of his decision. In an interview with WisPolitics.com, Courtney said he had agreed late last year to stay on for a couple of months, and that time was up.

"This just works well," Courtney said.

The party constitution requires an election for officers within 45 days of the November election, and Courtney had originally indicated plans to seek another two-year term. But U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Oshkosh, later told the Executive Committee there wasn't enough time to complete a post-election analysis before the required vote and Courtney had agreed to remain on an interim basis.

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The review is ongoing, and Courtney's resignation elevates First Vice-chair Andrew Hitt to acting chair until the Executive Committee votes on a replacement. Multiple GOP sources have told WisPolitics.com that Hitt is a top candidate to become the next chair.

Courtney's announcement comes a week after the party brought back Mark Jefferson to serve as executive director. He previously held that role from 2007-11, giving the GOP an experienced hand to lead day-to-day operations.

Courtney is the longest serving chair in party history, first working in the role from

2006-07 before returning again in 2011. A close friend of Scott Walker, he led the party during the recall elections of 2011 and 2012, Walker's re-election in 2014, and the state going red in 2016 before Dems swept statewide races last year.

In the interview, Courtney highlighted his work with the grassroots and the emphasis the party placed on identifying and turning out its voters.

"With our tremendous county party network, we helped get good people elected who did great things in office," Courtney said.