

One Wisconsin Now: Robin Vos, the secrecy speaker

Posted on Wednesday, Jan 2, 2019

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MEDIA CONTACT
Mike Browne, Deputy Director
mike@OneWisconsinNow.org
[\(608\) 444-3483](tel:(608)444-3483)

Reports Reveal How Vos Sought to Keep Public's Business Secret and Silence Former Spouse

MADISON, Wis. — Assembly Speaker “Boss” Robin Vos has shown he doesn’t like leaks in either his professional or private life, based on recent media reports and public records. As reported by the media, Vos imposed a gag order in his separation and divorce agreements with his second wife. Vos’ record also reveals that as a legislator he has sought to make it harder for the public to find out what he and the Republican controlled legislature are up to.

“Robin Vos is literally the Secrecy Speaker,” said One Wisconsin Now Executive Director Scot Ross. “In public policy and in his personal life Robin Vos has sought to shut out the public and shut up those who might damage his quest for political power.”

As reported by the Associated Press:

“Vos’s first two marriages ended in divorce. Under the terms of his second divorce, which was finalized in 2017, his ex-wife Samantha was barred from speaking with anyone about their marriage or the grounds for the divorce. The separation agreement, made in 2012 as Vos was preparing to run for speaker, prohibited her from changing her marital status on Facebook until after the election.”

Records have also revealed that Vos’ predilection for privacy extends to his conduct of the public’s business in the state legislature.

Republicans engaged in unprecedented secrecy surrounding their 2011 rigging of the state legislative district lines as part of the redistricting process. Vos, then co-chair of the powerful budget writing Joint Committee on Finance, appeared to have been [helping to coordinate legislators signing secrecy agreements](#) regarding the legislative map rigging and advising them on what to say if questioned about it. The results have been beneficial for Vos as evidenced by his Assembly Republicans winning 63 of the 99 seats in the Assembly despite, in sum, winning only 46 percent of the votes cast in the 2018 November election.

As Assembly Speaker, Vos was a key leader in the 2015 efforts by the Republican-controlled legislature and outgoing Gov. Scott Walker to [change state open records laws to create a massive “deliberative process” loophole](#) that would have allowed legislators to evade disclosing records. According to records, it was Vos that requested the proposed changes be drafted as legislation to be included in the state budget.

The Vos led effort also would have imposed a gag order on legislative staff to prevent them from discussing issues, even after they had left their jobs.

Ross concluded, “The clear message from Boss Robin Vos is that he thinks his and the legislature’s business is none of the public’s business.”