

Vos adds seven positions to speaker's office

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Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who has said he wanted to staff up with Dem Tony Evers taking over the East Wing, has added seven positions to his office.

He did so by pulling in positions from the chief clerk and sergeant at arms' offices.

Vos has used the new positions to hire three former staffers in Gov. Scott Walker's administration. What's more, numbers Minority Leader Gordon Hintz obtained from the clerk's office and shared with WisPolitics.com show Vos also gave his chief of staff a more than 20 percent raise.

Hintz has been critical of Vos over four of his Dem members sharing two offices this session, compared to two sharing one in 2017-18 even as Republicans lost a seat in the November elections. Today, he questioned why Vos was hiring more staff on top of that.

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But Vos countered his office will still have the same number of positions it did before.

"Now we're just going to have them more accurately reflect what they're really doing and who they're working for as opposed to this construct where they're on the chief clerk's roster but they really work every day in this office or Gordon Hintz's," he said.

Of the seven new staff positions, two were housed in the chief clerk's office last session, even though they were already under Vos' direction, while the other five were vacant.

The speaker also has a computer specialist who remains in the clerk's office, but works under his direction.

Altogether, it's 14 staffers, compared to five approved for the minority leader, not counting a computer specialist in the clerk's office who works under Hintz's direction.

Vos has used the new positions to hire: former state Rep. Joe Handrick, who served as consultant to Republicans as they redrew legislative lines in 2011; Heather Smith, whose experience includes serving as Walker's Medicaid director; and Evan Bradtke, who worked as a senior policy adviser.

Smith is classified as an administrative officer, a designation often used for legislative chiefs of staff. That position comes with a maximum salary of \$104,316, which is what Smith is being paid, according to the numbers from Hintz's office. Meanwhile, Vos created a speaker's chief of staff designation that comes with a maximum salary of \$126,720. Vos chief of staff Jenny Toftness is currently at \$123,432.

Vos said Toftness' salary is now more in line with what the gov's chief of staff makes.

Altogether, Vos' office payroll is now more than \$800,000 even with the two positions left to fill. That works out to an average salary of \$73,149.

"The Republican caucus is smaller. Yet they continue to take more offices," Hintz said. "They have one less member. Yet they have more staff."

Assembly Republicans came into the session with a 63-36 majority, though the seat of Dem Peter Barca is now vacant after he resigned to join the Evers administration.

Vos also rebuffed concerns he's consolidating staff in his office to create a shadow caucus in an effort to counterbalance the Evers administration, noting that Gov. Tony Evers gets more than 250 direct appointments, while Vos is filling five vacant positions.

"I don't really think that's an accurate comparison," he said.

The overall Assembly GOP payroll is \$6.8 million with an average salary of \$52,434, compared to \$2.8 million for Dems with an average of \$43,809, according to the

Hintz numbers.

See more on the office moves in Friday's PM Update:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2019/fri-pm-update-more-assembly-dems-sharing-office-s-despite-fewer-gop-members/>