

Vos rounds out office staff with 14 now under his direction

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Assembly Speaker Robin Vos added two new staffers last month, filling the last of the 14 positions he put under his authority for the session.

The additions of Julie Lund and Ashley Luke have pushed Vos' payroll to more than \$975,000 for staffers either working directly for him in the speaker's office or under his guidance through the Chief Clerk's office.

The speaker's staff is more than twice the size of Minority Leader Gordon Hintz's. The Oshkosh Dem has six people under his direction, including five in his office and one working out of the chief clerk's office at his direction. Altogether, their salaries total \$415,601.

As he did when the moves first became public, Hintz questioned Vos' need to staff up with a smaller majority than Republicans had last session after losing one seat in the November elections.

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"Anytime you see a doubling of staff in response to a change in the executive branch despite having a smaller majority, it raises questions," Hintz said.

Vos earlier this year added seven new staff positions to his office, pulling in positions from the chief clerk and sergeant at arms' offices. That included five positions that were vacant at the time and two in the chief clerk's office that were already working at his direction.

Asked about the latest hires, a Vos spokeswoman referred WisPolitics.com to the speaker's comments in January, when he said the move didn't increase the number of positions, but more accurately reflected what they were doing.

Lund, a former TV reporter and anchor, served as Gov. Scott Walker's deputy communications director before moving to the Department of Health Services, where she was communications director. In her new role, Lund will work with outstate media and Assembly GOP members on their communications, a Vos spokeswoman said.

Luke is a legislative assistant. That post was previously filled by Moriah Thiry, who has been promoted to a policy adviser position, which has a higher salary range than the LA position.

Staffing and office space have been a point of contention between Vos and Hintz since the session began. Despite gaining a seat in last fall's elections, Dems are sharing more offices in the 2019-20 session than they did in the last one. The current GOP majority is 63-35 with one vacancy after Dem Peter Barca resigned to join the Evers administration.

Vos' office said it offered Hintz room 121 West but was turned down. At the time, Vos' office said the room, which housed GOP Rep. Chuck Wichers last session, would be used as storage if Dems didn't want it for one of their members. But the name of Gary Vossekuil, a graphic artist working for Assembly Republicans out of the clerk's office, is now listed on the door.

Vos spokeswoman Kit Beyer said it was decided to move Vossekuil to the Capitol from the Risser Building after Dems declined to take that space for a member.

Hintz said his caucus was only offered the office if Vos was allowed to pick which Dem member could use it. He said the terms were unacceptable.