

# Assembly Dems choose Neubauer, Haywood to lead caucus

Posted on Tuesday, Dec 21, 2021

Incoming Assembly Minority Leader Greta Neubauer, D-Racine, told WisPolitics.com the Dem caucus has some healing to do after Rep. Jimmy Anderson charged that some of his colleagues questioned his ability to be in leadership due to his disability.

Anderson, D-Fitchburg, was one of five members who originally planned to run for assistant minority leader in yesterday's elections. But he withdrew from the race after an emotional speech in which he said several colleagues told him they were worried about how the position would impact his health. Anderson, who is paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair, said the comments broke his heart and those with disabilities know such questions are code for someone doubting they have the ability to do the job.

Rep. Kalan Haywood, D-Milwaukee, won the assistant minority leader's post.

"We need to take his comments to heart, and we need to work to be better as a caucus," Neubauer said in an interview after Assembly Dems met.

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Neubauer said her immediate tasks include reaching out to members to see which issues they want to lead on, saying it needs to be a group effort in a challenging year. Neubauer also said she plans to lean on those who have been already recruiting candidates for the 2022 elections to continue helping in that endeavor.

And she'll make a decision next month about filling the vacancy that will be created on the Joint Finance Committee when she takes over for Rep. Gordon Hintz, D-Oshkosh, as caucus leader next month.

“I expect I will make an announcement in January on that front in case we have ongoing business with ARPA dollar allocations or other things,” said Neubauer.

Haywood will take over the No. 2 spot in mid-February after Dianne Hesselbein, D-Middleton, steps down to focus on her bid for state Senate.

Neubauer said the biggest challenge for Assembly Dems in the coming months will be the continued attack on “the foundations of our democracy” by conservatives.

“We are the front line in pushing back against that,” Neubauer said.

Neubauer, 30, is the youngest person to lead a legislative caucus in either house of the Wisconsin Legislature since 1943, according to the Legislative Reference Bureau.

GOP state Sen. John Byrnes was elected majority leader in 1943 when he was still 29.

Neubauer is the youngest Assembly minority leader since at least 1939, when the LRB’s records begin on the position. LRB noted the position was far less official prior to that time.