

Sen. Larson: Confirming Evers' appointments too little, too late

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Milwaukee, WI – “State Senate approves 39 gubernatorial appointments” is a headline you might expect to see in the first few months of an administration – not nearly 3 years removed from that governor’s election. Such is the state of the current obstructionist GOP legislature we have in Wisconsin that one of the basic tenets of the job becomes headline news. It would be nice if those 39 appointments were the last of the bunch, but sadly we still have over 100 left to go. Put another way, the appointments who still have not been confirmed after today’s action have collectively waited over 32,000 days.

As I pointed out weeks ago, and fact-checkers confirmed, until today, Senate Republicans had dragged their feet on over 150 Evers appointees, including multiple cabinet secretaries. Even now, the head of the Department of Health Services has yet to be confirmed, with the first nominee for the post having joined the Biden administration, and the second still waiting for her day in committee, over 5 and a half months after referral. In the middle of a once in a century pandemic, you might expect some urgency in confirming a health secretary.

Not that Wisconsin Republicans don’t have urgency. Their urgency is reserved for culture-war fodder like banning subjects that aren’t even being taught from our public schools, further restricting abortion access, attempting to ban trans athletes from participating with others of their identified gender, and suing to block any pandemic mitigation orders from going into effect.

The sad truth is that this sort of dysfunction is exactly the way the GOP likes it. If you spend most of your energy trying to sabotage the governor and score points with the most extreme elements of your base, you don’t have to solve problems or take responsibility when things go wrong or problems go unaddressed.

We ought to be working to solve our childcare crisis, raising the minimum wage, strengthening workplace safety, and ensuring affordable housing for working people across the state. Instead, we're left thanking our lucky stars that enough public pressure mounted that GOP leadership finally agreed to vote on less than one-third of the outstanding gubernatorial appointments.

This is not how our government is supposed to work, and the people of Wisconsin deserve better.