

Rep. Allen: Releases statement on Capitol office staffing

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Madison, WI – Rep. Allen released the following statement today relating to Capitol office staffing:

Speaker Vos attempted to silence Rep Tim Ramthun by removing an authorized staff person from the representative's office, because he didn't like what Ramthun was saying. Vos practices the very cancel culture that he condemns.

Representative Ramthun was duly elected by the people of the 59th district to be their spokesperson. He does not serve in a Vos Administration. He has no responsibility to toe the line of the Assembly Republican caucus. He serves at the pleasure of the people of the 59th district. As a representative of the people of that district, he ought to be afforded all of the rights and privileges that come with the office and that are afforded to every other member of the body.

In this political body called the Assembly, we are to rely on our persuasive abilities – through evidence and argument – to be able to, as our will and our abilities permit us, convince our colleagues of the merits of our case.

Yet the leader of the Assembly relies on his power over the body, certainly the Republican caucus, to the greatest extent possible – both inside the Capitol and outside – to accomplish his will.

A simple illustration of this is the allocation of staff. We have before us the

Ramthun case. We also have as another illustration the case of myself, Rep Horlacher, and Rep Brooks, who, since the beginning of this term have been without a committee chairmanship (except Brooks, who was just recently assigned a new committee) which effectively provides us .5 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members less than most of our colleagues.

Was the committee chairmanship decision made based on merit? Did the Speaker evaluate our education, work experience, policy knowledge, or skill at running committee meetings and determine that the three of us just didn't measure up to our colleagues? Or were we ruled out because of our outspoken criticism of the Speaker, his policies, and practices?

Sour grapes, you might be thinking. Well, let's take a look at the inverse of the situation. Dating back to 1997 - through different gubernatorial administrations - with Democrat majorities or Republican majorities the FTE staff allocation to the Speaker's office has held fairly constant at six (6). In recent years Vos has grown his staff allocation to 13 FTE. If we focus on filled positions (10), that is still a 67% increase in a few short years.

How exactly has the Speaker's job become more complex? Has technology made it more difficult? Why has there not been a corresponding increase in staff allocation to members?

Power can be addictive and the exercise of power can become ugly. I began this term as a critic, and I remain one. I remain committed to the freedom of Assembly members and their ability to contribute as representatives of the people who elected them. They serve the people of Wisconsin, not Robin Vos.