

Vos OK with 2020 election probe extending past February, blames lawsuits for delays

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Assembly Speaker Robin Vos said he's OK if Michael Gableman continues to work on his review past the end of February, calling delays the unfortunate result of lawsuits challenging the former state Supreme Court justice's 2020 election probe.

"I have been saying if it wouldn't have been for liberals suing us, this would've been concluded by December," Vos told reporters after a committee meeting yesterday. "If the liberals choose to keep suing us, well, it will unfortunately have to go on. We can't let the subpoenas die. We can't let the clock run out because of a bunch of high-priced lawyers suing the Legislature."

Vos, R-Rochester, has said he wants Gableman to have a final report by the end of February. But a Gableman spokesman told WisPolitics.com last week there was "no way" the probe would be wrapped up by then as the office hashes out in court its authority to compel compliance with subpoenas it has issued. The spokesman said the office still plans to have recommendations to the Legislature before the end of February.

Among other things, a Waukesha County Court has a hearing scheduled for Friday on Gableman's efforts to compel the mayors of Green Bay and Madison to comply with his subpoenas. Dem AG Josh Kaul's lawsuit to prevent Gableman from questioning Elections Commission Administrator Meagan Wolfe in private is also still pending in Dane County Court.

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WisPolitics.com also reported on Friday that Gableman had expanded his probe to

include Nebraska-based Dominion Voting Systems Inc. and Electronic Systems & Software. Vos signed the subpoenas and said he believed Gableman had the right to seek documents from the companies, though he acknowledged he wasn't sure of the legal process to do so.

Meanwhile, Gableman is poised to exhaust some line items in the \$676,000 taxpayer-funded budget that Vos had earlier approved for him. For example, \$196,000 was set aside for salaries, and Gableman had already paid out \$170,935 by the end of December.

Vos said Gableman is able to move money around within the overall \$676,000 budget, and he hopes to stick to that overall price tag.

"If it has to be repurposed to defend the subpoenas or do other things, I don't think that's a big deal," Vos said.

In recent letters to Gableman's office, attorneys for Green Bay and Madison have questioned whether the former justice has the authority to compel them to turn over additional information he's subpoenaed without a formal amendment to the contract extending it.

Vos said he expects to have a signed amendment "in the near future."