

Vos urges UW regents to reconsider pick for Madison chancellor; Mnookin says she's never met GOP leader

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Assembly Speaker Robin Vos called the choice of UCLA Law School Dean Dr. Jennifer Mnookin as UW-Madison chancellor a “blatant partisan selection” and urged the Board of Regents to reconsider her appointment.

The UW System on Monday announced the Board of Regents had unanimously chosen Mnookin, who replaces Rebecca Blank as leader of the system's flagship campus.

Vos, R-Rochester, slammed the pick and called the decision “a step backwards” in the university's relationship with the Legislature.

“After all the work of Tommy Thompson and Rebecca Blank that attempted to strengthen relationships between the university and the Legislature, this is a step backwards,” Vos said. “I strongly hope the Board of Regents will reconsider their selection.”

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UW System Director of Media Relations Mark Pitsch noted to WisPolitics.com that Mnookin was chosen unanimously by the regents. The board currently includes 11 appointees of Dem Gov. Tony Evers and five by former GOP Gov. Scott Walker. The other two members serve on the board because of their positions: state Superintendent Jill Underly and Rodney Pasch, president of the Tech College System Board.

In response to Vos' release, Mnookin told WisPolitics.com she hadn't met Vos, but looked forward to doing so.

Mnookin will begin her new role on Aug. 4. Blank's last day is May 31, and UW-Madison Provost John Karl Scholz will serve as interim chancellor until Mnookin takes the helm. Scholz was a finalist for the chancellor position.

"I plan to work with all members of the state Legislature, regardless of party, to help meet our common goal of moving the university and the state forward," Mnookin said.

Vos criticized Mnookin for a variety of reasons, including her support for critical race theory and vaccine mandates and for meeting with President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden in 2019.

Vos' release cited a tweet from the UCLA Law School showing Mnookin was featured on a 2021 panel titled "Critical Race Theory Under Attack: The Fight for Antiracist Education" and a tweet from Mnookin saying she is "very proud" of the university's critical race studies program.

The release also included tweets from Mnookin indicating her support for vaccine mandates on campuses.

In addition, Vos' statement included a link to a Daily Caller article on Hunter Biden considering teaching at UCLA. The report details communications with UCLA staff, including Mnookin. According to the report, Mnookin indicated in an email she had met with Hunter Biden.

Vos also cited a series of donations from Mnookin to Democrats on the FEC website. Some donations include:

- *\$2,000 in donations to former President Obama in 2008;
- *\$250 in donations to former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in 2016; and
- *\$500 to Joe Biden's 2020 presidential campaign.

Dems on Twitter congratulated Mnookin on her appointment, including Rep. Francesca Hong, D-Madison.

"The 76th district looks forward to your leadership and commitment to the Wisconsin Idea!" Hong tweeted.