

DOA cut off building access for Senate chief clerk at request of chamber's sergeant at arms

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The Department of Administration cut off Senate Chief Clerk Mike Queensland's access to state buildings two weeks ago at the request of the chamber's sergeant at arms for undisclosed reasons.

Senate GOP leaders aren't saying why, and they don't want caucus members talking about or asking questions, according to sources.

A DOA spokesperson told WisPolitics the agency removed Queensland's badge access to state buildings, including the Capitol, on the evening of Aug. 23. That's the same day the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms office requested the move.

Sergeant-at-Arms Tom Engels referred WisPolitics to the office of Senate Majority Leader Devin LeMahieu, R-Oostburg, for comment. A LeMahieu spokesperson said the office doesn't comment on personnel matters.

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Senate GOP sources told WisPolitics that Republican caucus members were first notified during a late August phone meeting that Queensland was on leave and leaders couldn't discuss why. The sources said the issue again came up in caucus this week, and members were instructed not to talk with each other or the media about the situation due to an ongoing investigation.

The Senate will be on the floor Sept. 14 for the first time since finishing work on the budget in late June, and the chief clerk's responsibilities include providing advice and support to the chamber on parliamentary procedure and processing legislation.

The sources said GOP senators were told during caucus that leadership was working on a plan for how the floor period will run Sept. 14 if Queensland isn't present.

Queensland, then a senior staff attorney for the Wisconsin Legislative Council, was tapped in late 2020 to succeed Jeff Renk as Senate chief clerk. He had worked for the non-partisan legal arm of the Legislature since 2011 before his selection as chief clerk.