

Koschnick says new liberal majority on state Supreme Court poised to fire him as State Courts director

Posted on Tuesday, Aug 1, 2023

Director of State Courts Randy Koschnick told WisPolitics that liberal Justice Jill Karofsky has informed him the state Supreme Court will vote today to remove him from the post after six years on the job.

Koschnick said Karofsky gave him no reason for the planned move, prompting him to speculate it was politically motivated.

Koschnick, who was a Jefferson County Circuit Court judge prior to his appointment in 2017, challenged then-liberal Justice Shirley Abrahamson in 2008.

The court today flipped to a 4-3 liberal majority, with Janet Protasiewicz officially joining the body.

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Koschnick said there is no formal conference or meeting of the justices on today's calendar. He said seeking to remove him from the job without a formal meeting was highly unusual, if not unprecedented.

"She said, 'We're taking a vote. We have the votes to remove you, and we're appointing someone else,'" Koschnick said of yesterday's conversation. "I asked if I did something wrong. She said, 'No, we're just moving in a different direction.'"

Karofsky didn't immediately return a request for comment from WisPolitics late yesterday.

Koschnick said he received yesterday's call while at the Conference of State Court

Administrators' annual meeting in New York. He returns Thursday and said he asked Karofsky for time to make arrangements to continue his health care and other issues. He said Karofsky told him to call human resources with his questions.

Koschnick defended his performance in the position, noting he was given an award by the Wisconsin State Bar for his work in 2020 to keep state courts running during the COVID-19 pandemic through the use of technology. Koschnick also said his work has helped resolve the court reporter shortage in Wisconsin.

"I even said to Justice Karofsky, 'Has anyone ever complained about anything that I've done? Have I done anything below the level of competence?'" Koschnick said. "She said, 'No, we're just moving in a different direction.'"

Conservative Justice Rebecca Bradley slammed the move, writing in a text message to WisPolitics that "Political purges of court employees are beyond the pale."

"This abuse of power is unprecedented and illegitimate," Bradley wrote. "It should be condemned by all judges."