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GOP lawmaker alleges Robin Vos retaliated against him for seeking more conservative leadership

Riley Vetterkind | Wisconsin State Journal
Jan 6, 2021

A conservative Republican lawmaker alleges Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, has retaliated against him and other conservative representatives for seeking a leadership change in the new legislative session, highlighting a rare public divide in a legislative majority that typically sticks together.



Rep. Scott Allen, R-Waukesha, recently sent a letter to his Republican colleagues alleging that Vos is punishing conservatives who unsuccessfully challenged the Assembly GOP leadership during caucus elections by “stripping the veteran members involved in that initiative of our committee chairmanships.”

“His goal is to penalize us to get us to behave and do what he wants,” Allen wrote. “We had conservatives run for nearly every position in leadership, and we all lost.”

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Allen

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Allen called for the change in leadership in October, before President Donald Trump lost the election, by arguing that GOP legislative leaders had failed to advance a bold enough conservative agenda that reflected Trump’s base. Allen maintained that view even after Trump’s election loss.

A Vos spokeswoman didn’t respond to a request for comment.

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Allen, who declined a request for comment, wrote that the effort by him and “several” other Republicans to challenge Assembly GOP leadership by seeking leadership positions stemmed from a belief that Republicans need to be more conservative and do more to respond to the C

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Allen didn't say who the other members were and provided no other details about what happened during the Assembly leadership elections. During the previous legislative cycle, Allen served as chairman of the Committee on Community Development as well as vice chairman of two committees, but in the new session was stripped of his chairmanship. He kept two vice chairman positions.

“The majority of our caucus perceive that their future electoral success will come under the guide of current leadership and their Democrat-light agenda,” Allen said. “They so love their jobs as legislators that they are afraid to be conservatives.”



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Mitchell Schmidt | Wisconsin State Journal , Riley Vetterkind | Wisconsin State Journal

In a letter sent to his colleagues just days after Trump's election loss in Wisconsin, Allen said the Republican Party has changed, that it now consists of “hard-working people who love freedom,” and that the Republican leadership needs to reflect that reality. He said Republicans will need Trump voters to win future elections.

He described such voters as both rich and poor, of different races, and in both urban and rural areas — people who have a “healthy distrust” of the establishment, including the media, lobbyists, bureaucrats and career politicians.

He contrasted such voters with Republicans such as U.S. Sen. Mitt Romney, who “put dignity and class first.”

“(New Trump Republicans) are hard-working people who have had to scratch with the chickens to get what they got, and they want us to aggressively fight for their interests,” Allen said.



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Allen asked his Republican colleagues whether they had experienced “being undermined or double-crossed or misled” by Republican leadership, or “surprised by deals being negotiated behind your back.”

Allen went on to lambast the Republican strategy for the 2020 campaign cycle as timid and too similar to that of Democrats. He alleged Republican leaders have failed to anticipate the strategy of Gov. Tony Evers, who he described as “playing to win.”

Allen’s remarks come as Republicans across the nation grapple with how to respond to Trump’s insistence that he won the election. A minority of GOP House and U.S. Senate lawmakers, including U.S. Sen. Ron Johnson, of Oshkosh, plan to object to President-elect Joe Biden’s win during the counting of electoral votes on Wednesday, a move many Republicans have criticized.

According to a former Brown County GOP chairman, Johnson told him that he knows Biden won but waited to publicly admit it because it would alienate him from Trump voters. Johnson has continued to promote unsubstantiated allegations of election irregularities in the presidential race.

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