

Changing How We Police Politicians Forever

Posted on Oct 29, Posted by [Jon Erpenbach Press. State Senator 27th District](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



When a political crime is committed, politicians should not have special privileges. Exempting politicians from the reach of John Doe investigations, making the GAB partisan and allowing unlimited corporate contributions are not “reforms” to make Wisconsin laws better.

MADISON - For Republicans in office right now, the John Doe 1 and John Doe 2 criminal investigations feel very personal. That’s because they involved their political leader Governor Walker and his former staff and groups that he coordinated campaign activity with. Those are undisputed facts. The reality though is that those investigations were not personal at all. They were not political at all. They were routine action taken against people that were believed to have broken the law. The case was made, by multiple judges, by multiple district attorneys of both parties to take action in these political crime probes.

As a gut reaction to these criminal investigations the Legislature is enacting a set of three bills that will change the rules for every politician forever. District attorney’s in this state have investigated and pursued criminal charges against politicians throughout our history. Recently both Democrats and Republicans were charged and convicted for political criminal activity.

When a political crime is believed to have been committed there should be equal treatment under the law, police, district attorneys and judges. Politicians should not have special privileges.

Exempting politicians from the reach of John Doe investigations, making the Government Accountability Board partisan and allowing unlimited corporate contributions is what the Legislature is enacting into law. It is not political to say that this is a Republican effort; not one

Democrat has voted for these changes to the law. These are not “reforms” to make Wisconsin laws better, because if they were they would be bi-partisan. If there were a true interest in reforming the law it would be done with cooperation. People believe we don’t work together on anything, but in reality we do – almost every bill that gets enacted into law has support by both Democrats and Republicans.

It is only bills like these three; the ones that are true partisan agenda items that do not get broad support in the Legislature. Again I would offer I understand the knee jerk reaction to investigations of criminal activity against a leader, I think it is natural to defend someone you follow. But when we change the law, we change it forever. We change it for every politician that will sit on the Senate and Assembly floor in the years that stretch ahead, long after current political leaders are gone. These bills make it easier for political criminals to break the law and harder for district attorney’s to prosecute political crimes. That is simple fact. These bills leave fewer prosecutorial tools in the toolbox, partisan watchdogs rather than non-partisan policing and unlimited corporate contribution made legal.

These changes affect the political and prosecutorial process forever. For more information on any of these bills please contact my office at 608-266-66790 or 888-549-0027 or sen.erpenbach@legis.wi.gov

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