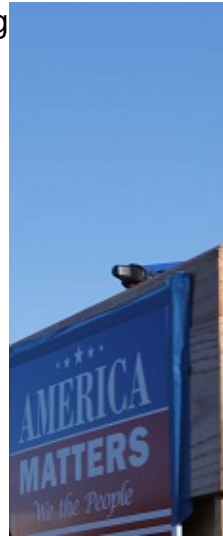


Wis Democracy Campaign - Don't Expand Gableman's Role

Written by Matt Rothschild, Wisconsin Democracy Campaign

Friday, 21 January 2022 07:00 - Last Updated Friday, 21 January 2022 18:01

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Matt Rothschild makes statement to the Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections opposing the motion to enlarge the scope of the special counsel's role.

MADISON - I'm Matt Rothschild, the executive director of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign. Since 1995, we've been tracking and exposing the money in Wisconsin politics and advocating for a broad range of pro-democracy reforms.

We strongly object to this [motion](#) to enlarge the scope of the special counsel's role for the following eight reasons.

Problem #1: This motion violates the separation of powers by giving the special counsel prosecutorial powers.

It would allow [Gableman](#) to interview citizens in private, behind closed doors with no legislative oversight. There is no statute or rule that allows for this type of private, quasi-deposition and secretive process, and the people of Wisconsin rightfully expect transparency in their lawmaking and from their legislature. The legislature is not supposed to be in the prosecution business. That role properly resides in the executive branch.

Problem #2: The special counsel has a preconceived bias that makes him unsuited for this job.

Just days after the election, Michael Gableman, at a partisan Republican rally, said: "Our elected leaders — your elected leaders — have allowed unelected bureaucrats at the Wisconsin Elections Commission to steal our vote." Someone who has made such a slanderous accusation and has demonstrated such a preconceived bias should not be in charge of the investigation. The accuser should not become the prosecutor.

Problem #3: Staff members of the special counsel have the same preconceived bias that disqualifies them from their jobs and that reinforces the disqualifying bias of the special counsel.

Gableman's chief of staff, [Andrew Kloster](#), also has said that the election was stolen. What's more, he said in April that conservatives need their own "irate hooligans" like the Proud Boys and "our own captured DA offices to let our boys off the hook." This is an incitement to rightwing vigilante violence and to corrupt enforcement of the law! Other staff members are similarly biased. One of his investigators, Ron Heuer, is the president of the Wisconsin Voters Alliance, which unsuccessfully sued to prevent the Wisconsin Elections Commission from certifying the election and sought instead to have the Republican-controlled Legislature pick the representatives Wisconsin sent to the Electoral College. These partisan biases could not be more glaring or more disqualifying.

Problem #4: The special counsel has shown that he does not have the background or skills necessary for this job.

The special counsel admitted in public that he doesn't have "any understanding of how elections work." So why he is in charge? He also has shown extraordinary sloppiness in the way he's been doing his job. Example 1: He subpoenaed Dominion voting machines from Madison and Green Bay when neither Madison nor Green Bay uses Dominion voting machines. Example 2: He asked Green Bay and Madison for all information about voters held by their computer systems, but that could include information like birth dates, driver's license numbers, and addresses. Voters have an expectation that their personal information will not be treated with such callousness.

Problem #5: The special counsel does not have the proper temperament for this job.

The special counsel interrupted and berated members of this very Committee in previous "public" hearings in a way that no witness in memory has gotten away with. Also at one of these hearings, the special counsel, by name, accused one of the most senior Capitol reporters in our state as being an "activist." And the special counsel also said that State Senator Kathy Bernier, chair of the Senate Committee on Elections, should resign. Such outbursts reveal a serious character flaw that should disqualify Gableman from this office.

Problem #6: The special counsel is squandering the public's resources with no endpoint in sight.

The office of the special counsel has already cost the taxpayers of Wisconsin \$676,000. The boundless motion to expand his role would keep the meter running overtime. It's the very definition of a blank check. Speaker Vos, who originally appointed Gableman, said that the special counsel should wrap up his work last October, and then the Speaker extended that to the end of the last year, and then to the end of this January, and then to the end of February. And now the Committee's motion would extend it even further, with no end in sight. This constant shifting of the goalposts does a disservice to the public, and to the public's wallet.

Problem #7: The special counsel is serving not the public interest but a narrow partisan interest.

The November 2020 elections are now more than 14 months old. Donald Trump went 0-60 in the courts, including 0-3 at the Wisconsin Supreme Court. He demanded a recount in Dane County and Milwaukee County, and the recount found the same result. The Legislative Audit Bureau examined our elections, and according to Sen. Rob Cowles, co-chair of the Legislative Audit Committee, the audit showed that our elections are "safe and secure." Even the conservative Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty found that there was no widespread fraud. Sen. Bernier has denounced the endless beating of this dead horse as a "charade." And yet it continues. Not in search of the truth, but for other reasons:

- to provide some post-facto justification for the Big Lie that spills out of Donald Trump's mouth right after he says good morning
- to back up the regurgitation of that lie by the likes of Michael Gableman and others
- to feed rancid red meat to the zealous base of the Trump wing of the Republican Party
- and to keep that base agitated through the elections of 2022 and 2024.

Our tax dollars should not be squandered for such hyper-partisan purposes.

Problem #8: The special counsel's ceaseless casting of aspersions about the legitimacy of the November 2020 elections undermines the people's faith in our democracy.



There has been an unprecedented attempt, nationwide and here in Wisconsin, by the Trumpite

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wing of the Republican Party to sabotage our American way of political life. Never before have we seen a President not vow to have a peaceful transition of power. Never before have we seen anything like the Jan. 6 coup attempt. And still people like Michael Gableman claim that the election was "rigged." These are like parents at a high school game screaming at the refs in the parking lot more than a year after the game ended. It would be pathetic if it weren't so dangerous to our democracy and our freedom to vote.

Thank you for considering my views.

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