*EDITOR’S NOTE: This column is provided to Wisconsin Newspaper Association members by WisPolitics.com. Proper attribution in your newspapers IS REQUIRED, including the byline “WisPolitics.com” and the tagline at the end of the column.*

**Vos pressured as election audits gain momentum within GOP**

*By WisPolitics.com*

More than half of the state’s county Republican parties have formally called for a “cyber forensic audit” of the 2020 elections.

Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, R-Rochester, is using the same language as he expands the review headed by former Wisconsin Justice Michael Gableman.

But the man leading the effort to get county parties on board with the call for an audit insists what Vos wants isn’t enough.

“What we’re learning is that the speaker has absolutely no intention whatsoever of having a full, forensic, physical and cyber audit,” said Jefferson Davis, leader of what backers call the Ad Hoc Committee for Wisconsin’s Forensic Cyber Audit. He sees such an audit involving reviews of election equipment and ballots plus canvassing.

The GOP-led reviews of the 2020 election advanced on several fronts in late August as Vos met with former President Trump on a private plane to update him on the work and then announced a $680,000 budget for Gableman’s probe. Meanwhile, the Assembly Organization Committee has circulated a ballot to allow Gableman to oversee an Office of Special Counsel, including the hiring of investigators and other staff for the election review.

To insiders, the moves are signs that Vos is trying to control the election review efforts while reassuring a segment of the GOP base that is convinced the 2020 election was stolen. But challenges remain with Davis’ group and other activists who are looking for an Arizona-style review of the election.

Meanwhile, Democrats have denounced the efforts. Rep. Mark Spreitzer, D-Beloit, and a member of the Campaigns and Elections Committee, called it an “absolutely absurd waste of taxpayer dollars.”

GOP lawmakers have initiated three reviews of the election, including one by the Legislative Audit Bureau. That review is expected to be completed in September, while Vos expects Gableman to wrap up his probe by late October.

Meanwhile, Rep. Janel Brandtjen, R-Menomonee Falls, has been leading a review by the Campaigns and Elections Committee. Earlier this month, Brandtjen issued subpoenas to Brown and Milwaukee county officials seeking materials such as ballots and voting machines. But the Legislative Council has opined twice this year that legislative subpoenas need the signature of the chamber’s presiding officer and chief clerk to compel the production of materials and testimony.

Vos said in late August he won’t sign the subpoenas issued by Brandtjen, saying he’s focused on Gableman’s review. He also said he will allow Gableman to define the parameters of a “cyber-forensic audit.”

Brandtjen declined comment on Vos’ decision. She said any forensic audit of the election should include looking at voting machines and obtaining the ballots that were cast, which she called the “gold standard” of a review.

 A “forensic cyber audit” has become the buzzword among Republicans when talking about a review of the 2020 election, even if they’re not always on the same page about what one means.

Davis, who is self-employed and works in estate planning for families and small businesses, insisted a forensic cyber audit includes three components.

The “cyber” piece of the desired review includes looking at voting machines, tabulators, scanners and other voting equipment. It also would mean reviewing logs of those who serviced the machines.

In Arizona, the examination of Maricopa County’s voting machines led election officials to declare new ones were needed because the review had tainted machines used in the 2020 election.

The second piece would be to review all of the more than 3.2 million ballots cast last fall. The final piece would be an in-person canvass that would include going door-to-door to ensure voter rolls are accurate.

He acknowledged that residents couldn’t be compelled to participate in such a canvass and that the effort would need subpoenas to access voting equipment.

While Vos has ruled out signing the subpoenas that Brandtjen signed, Davis vowed a pressure campaign from backers would convince Vos and other GOP leaders to back her effort. Still, Davis also said he wouldn’t suggest anyone primary Vos or other GOP leaders if they don’t come around on the issue.

Insiders see Vos’ refusal to sign Brandtjen’s subpoenas as a way to keep the focus on Gableman’s effort, of which he has more control. They also see a segment of the GOP base that won’t be satisfied with the results of any review unless it results in criminal charges or the reversal of the election results.

Vos recently spoke to the Racine-based H.O.T. Government, an acronym of Honest, Open and Transparent, where some members of the crowd raised the specter of criminal charges over how the election was run.

The crowd also peppered him with questions about the election, including some who questioned why he wasn’t using Brandtjen’s committee as the main vehicle to review the election. Vos noted Brandtjen isn’t an attorney, while Gableman is a former Supreme Court justice and he wants someone “who’s an attorney actually drafting the subpoenas to make sure that they are done correctly and not politically.”

Some in the crowd also insisted that election machines and results may have been hacked. Vos told the group that voting machines aren’t connected to the internet, which is true. But the crowd reacted with skepticism.

Vos told the crowd there were a number of things about the 2020 election that were wrong. Still, he pleaded with them to focus on things that can be fixed rather than some of the false information that’s being pushed on social media.

“Some of (the false information) that people are obsessed with, they just aren’t accurate,” Vos said.

*For more, visit WisPolitics.com*

*The Capitol Report is written by editorial staff at WisPolitics.com, a nonpartisan, Madison-based news service that specializes in coverage of government and politics, and is distributed for publication by members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.*

*Copyright © WisPolitics.com*