**Law library name change stirs controversy**

By WisPolitics.com

The switch from conservative to liberal rule on the Wisconsin Supreme Court is still being felt.

The latest episode: a renaming of the State Law Library.

Yes, even that is steeped in political controversy.

In mid-June, around Wisconsin Women Lawyers Day, the liberal majority announced the renaming of the State Law Library after the first female lawyer in Wisconsin history. That means the removal of former conservative Justice David Prosser’s name in the process.

Liberal members of the court praised Lavinia Goodell as a trailblazer, with Justice Ann Walsh Bradley saying renaming the library is “an opportunity to recognize her legacy and inspire the next generation of women in Wisconsin.”

But conservative Justice Rebecca Bradley on X called the move “another petty and vindictive maneuver” by the court’s liberal majority. And fellow conservative Justice Pat Roggensack argued the court may not have statutory authority to rename the library.

The court’s then-conservative majority in 2016 named the library after Prosser.

This followed allegations by Ann Walsh Bradley in 2011 that he had choked her during a heated argument over the court’s ruling in Act 10, the law that stripped most public employees of collective bargaining powers.

A special prosecutor declined to press charges, and a complaint the Judicial Commission filed against Prosser went nowhere after justices recused themselves from the case because they were witnesses to the incident.

Roggensack told WisPolitics when she led the court as chief justice, she got permission from GOP Gov. Scott Walker and the Legislature to change the name of the State Law Library in Prosser’s honor, which she argued is required.

“If they want to name the Supreme Court Law Library, which is within their chambers, I guess they can call it whatever they want,” Roggensack said. “But this is not the Supreme Court’s law library, it is the State Law Library.”

However, the court’s public information office told WisPolitics the court was given full authority over the library in 1977, as noted on a web page about the library’s history.

“It does not need approval from the Governor or Legislature for a name change,” a spokesperson said.

Conservative Chief Justice Annette Ziegler in a statement to WisPolitics said the decision dishonored Prosser.

“There are many ways to honor Lavinia Goodell, which is entirely appropriate, without dishonoring a lifelong public servant like Justice David Prosser,” Ziegler said.

Liberal justices in statements announcing the name change praised Goodell as an example for women and the state, making no direct mentions of Prosser.

Justice Janet Protasiewicz, the newest member of the court whose election put liberals in charge, said the change is “the right thing to do.”

“When people enter this important space, they need to know they are somewhere named after a leader who inspired others to do good and do what is right,” Protasiewicz said.

According to the release, Goodell was admitted to practice law in Wisconsin in 1874, but was met with resistance. The state Supreme Court in 1875 unanimously denied her the right to represent a client before the court, which led her to draft legislation guaranteeing women the right to practice law in the state. Gov. Harrison Ludington signed the legislation into law two years later.

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