

Republicans Plan To Use Speaker's Task Force To Do Nothing About Racial Disparities

Written by Wisconsin Assembly, Shianya Thao

Thursday, 04 February 2021 11:08 - Last Updated Thursday, 04 February 2021 17:47



According to Up North News, Speaker Robin Vos and Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke created the Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities as a way to gain political points, rather than actually taking action.

MADISON – Today, in reporting by [Up North News](#) , it was revealed that Speaker Robin Vos and Assembly Majority Leader Jim Steineke created the Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities as a way to gain political points, rather than actually taking action to address the longstanding racial disparities plaguing Wisconsin. In an email sent just twenty-seven hours after the shooting of Jacob Blake, Steineke wrote that leading the taskforce *"is probably a political loser."*

Steineke then promised to ensure the task force would proceed slowly, *"...making sure it takes some time but yet there will be enough activity to show progress."*



Assembly Democratic Leader Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) called Steineke's statements offensive and appalling. "Based on their past history, most of us knew their proposed task force was another Republican tactic to avoid addressing an issue people around the state were calling for immediate action on. Rep. Steineke's comments confirm that skepticism, and demonstrate a new level of cynicism in discussing ways to avoid taking meaningful action to address systemic racism and racial disparities in Wisconsin," said Rep. Hintz. "His statement belies Assembly Republicans' true intention on the issue of racial disparities, which is to give the appearance of taking action without ever intending to enact meaningful change."

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Rep. Hintz noted Speaker Vos's history of forming task forces in response to major events and crises, which ultimately culminate in few, if any, changes in law despite hours of work by task force appointees and members of the public. Last session alone, Speaker Vos created:

- [Speaker's Task Force on Water Quality](#) (announced 1/3/19)
- [Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention](#) (announced 3/6/19)
- [Speaker's Task Force on Adoption](#) (announced 5/14/19)
- Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities (announced 8/24/20)

The three task forces announced in 2019 produced a total of thirty recommended bills, of which only two have been signed into law. The Speaker's Task Force on Racial Disparities, whose work Rep. Steineke promised to slow down, has not yet recommended legislation.

Continued Rep. Hintz, "This is not the first time Speaker Vos and Assembly Republicans have responded to an urgent crisis by creating a task force that spends months 'studying' an issue only to come up with limited proposals that are mostly ignored by the Republican Legislature."

"As disappointing as these emails were to read, there are real people serving on this task force who have committed time and energy working towards actionable policy recommendations that would make a difference. These people were not informed their effort was just part of a political distraction. If Republican leadership wants to make this right, then commit to passing meaningful changes in the near future, and pushing the Senate to do the same."