

## OPINION

## Where's the Weishan John Doe?

*Double standard  
exposed once  
and for all*

Galling as it is, it is helpful that John Weishan is being allowed to get away with brazenly using government resources in his political campaign for the state Assembly. It proves the point of those of us who have argued for years that Republicans get John Doe investigations and criminal prosecutions for activities Democrats routinely commit. Weishan's case is the perfect illustration.

A couple of months ago Weishan, a Milwaukee County Board member, used government resources to send a mailing to constituents of Republican Assemblyman Joe Sanfelippo. The government-funded letter attacked Sanfelippo's sponsorship of mental health reform. Many of the people who received the letter live in New Berlin, which is not only not in John Weishan's district, it isn't even in Milwaukee County! Now, only weeks after sending the taxpayer-paid letter, Weishan is running against Sanfelippo for the state Assembly.

Weishan managed to spend thousands of Milwaukee County tax dollars on a political attack against his opponent in this fall's elections. It is almost impossible to imagine a more perfect example of using government money for political purposes than this.

Yet, the reaction to Weishan's broad-daylight violation of the law has been a giant yawn from the same people who demand the gallows for Republicans who do anything approaching this.

Former Republican Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen faced a nearly decade-long prosecution for allegedly allowing state legislative staffers to do political work. A three-year John Doe investigation probed whether Milwaukee County government workers did political tasks for Scott Walker when he was county executive. When these cases were going on, frustrated conservatives like myself argued about the double standard. Weishan's case is a giant "I told you so."

It's almost impossible to separate government and politics because government officials advocating things can also achieve political purposes. This hasn't stopped the witch-hunting of Republicans. But Weishan? He knew exactly what he was doing and he knew full well his political affiliation gave him a free pass. Democrats get to drive 180 on the Wisconsin Autobahn while Republicans are permanently in a Racine County speed trap.

Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm, who went after former Walker aide Darlene Wink after she posted a pro-Walker comment on a newspaper website (horrors!) and led the first John Doe into the rest of the Walker staff, isn't doing anything about Weishan's letter. Nor is Waukesha County District Attorney Brad Schimel, who meekly claims he has no

authority over Weishan because Weishan lives in Milwaukee County. Schimel is a Republican, as supposedly is outgoing Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen, but both claim they can't do anything about Weishan.

The media? The same Milwaukee press that has been in a multiyear lather over its delusions of Walker wrongdoing is largely ignoring Weishan. His offense merited only a few paragraphs in the Journal Sentinel on an inside page while local TV said nothing. This is more than a mere double standard. It is the use of the law for selective targeting of Republicans based entirely on ideology and political affiliation. It is outrageous and morally indefensible. One might even argue it is corrupt.

But it is real and John Weishan proves it.

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Brad Schimel is the only Republican running to succeed Attorney General Van Hollen and got his party's formal endorsement over the weekend. But there are reasons to fear Schimel may be the same type of do-nothing coat holder as Van Hollen has been in his lackluster (I'm being kind) tenure as AG. The Weishan case raises red flags about whether Schimel is just J.B. with a full name instead of initials.

Schimel is technically correct that state law says government officials may only face criminal prosecutions in the counties in which they reside. Since Weishan lives in



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Milwaukee County, Schimel legally can't touch him. But there is nothing in the law that forces Schimel to stand by with a fat sock in his mouth while a Democrat commits political murder in Schimel's county.

Schimel could publicly call for Milwaukee prosecutors to investigate Weishan. He could use his status as a candidate for attorney general to call for an end to the prosecution of Republicans for behavior Democrats routinely get away with. He could at the very least (and I mean least) offer public criticism on a subject that directly involves political lawbreaking in a state in which he is a candidate to be the No. 1 law enforcement official. But Schimel has stood mute. Just like Van Hollen.

Schimel will argue that he doesn't want to politicize his job now or the one he is seeking. But he takes this stance in a state in which Democrats politicize everything and used a John Doe investigation of Walker for purely political reasons. The Democrats play hardball in this state and they play it unethically. The Republicans are playing tiddlywinks and they aren't even any good at that.

(Mark Belling is the host of a daily WISN radio talk show. His column appears weekly in the Milwaukee Post.)

## Pounding in the platform

By OWEN ROBINSON

The Republican Party of Wisconsin hosted its state convention over the weekend in Milwaukee. As expected, the party faithful gave resounding support for Gov. Scott Walker and Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch in their bid for re-election. The convention also aroused some controversy, most of it contrived, because of some of the proposed resolutions.

The primary reason for holding a political party convention, beyond the cheerleading and gladhanding, is for the party to define its platform. This is the document in which the party defines what it believes and states its goals.

The party platform used to be a lot more important than it has become today. In a two-party system where most elected officials were virtually unknown to most voters, the party platform helped voters decide for whom to vote. Party members were expected to adhere to the platform when elected in order to deliver on the wishes of the voters who elected them.

In the modern era, most candidates

define their platforms and communicate it through myriad media. Consequently, the official party platform has become more of a statement from the party faithful to their elected officials rather than a statement of positions for the electorate.

It is important in that politicians will have difficulty obtaining volunteers, money and other resources from the core of their party if they stray too far off of the party platform, but people do not rely upon that platform to define the politician.

The platform is assembled through a quasi-legislative process in which resolutions are passed through various committees and eventually voted upon by all of the delegates at the convention. Resolutions can also be introduced at a whim from the floor.

The process allows for almost anything to be brought to a vote if someone wants it bad enough – even the stupidest things. One of those stupid things that made it to the floor of the GOP convention was a resolution affirming the sovereign right of the state to secede from the union. It was, of course, overwhelmingly defeated, which represents the views of the vast majority of

Republicans in this state.

On the issue, it is an interesting discussion for academics and philosophers. Whether or not a state can leave the United States is not addressed in the Constitution and has never been adjudicated. The issue was settled, instead, on the battlefields of the Civil War with the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Americans.

Politically, the proposed secession resolution was an abomination. It is not a serious issue to even be considered by Republican officials.

In the meantime, even bringing it up in the context of a party convention opened the Republican Party up to countless attacks from their political enemies and their cohorts in the media. If you need proof, take a few minutes to scan the news of the days leading up to the GOP convention and count how many times secession was mentioned compared to the other resolutions – much less the hundreds of other interesting aspects of a state convention being attended



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by at least three potential presidential contenders. The fringe few who served up this proposal have laid out a smorgasbord on which the enemies of the party are dining.

It is worth noting that the way to change a political party's platform, and the resolutions that are considered for it, is to get involved. While many people disparage political parties and have a distaste for the way they operate, they are the means to political power and success.

Political parties do not have philosophies. They are not ideological. A rudimentary reading of the history of any political party will demonstrate the vastly different, and often contradictory, things for which a party has represented over time.

Political parties are a powerful apparatus designed for one thing and one thing only – the acquisition and retention of political power.

In a two-party system like we have, if you want your views represented by the people in power, it is up to you to pick a horse to ride and ride it. Either that, or sit in the stands with your mint julep and watch someone else's views win the day.

(Owen Robinson is a West Bend resident. His column runs frequently in The Post.)