

Wisconsin Elections Commission

State of Wisconsin

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Haas Asks Senators for Hearing and Confirmation Vote

MADISON, WI – Michael Haas, interim administrator of the Wisconsin Elections Commission, has written to members of the Wisconsin Senate, asking them to hold a public hearing prior to the confirmation vote scheduled for January 23.

“In the event that I am not allowed the courtesy of a public hearing, I am providing this correspondence to share some of what I would include in my testimony, to outline my qualifications and approach to my job, and to set the record straight,” Haas wrote in a letter Wednesday.

“When I visited with all State Senators during introductory meetings in late 2016 and early 2017, the vast majority of you, Republicans and Democrats alike, expressed your support for my appointment and leadership of the agency. I believe that my performance to date has justified your initial confidence in my appointment as well as that of the Commission and its staff, and any fair assessment of my record must conclude that it warrants the Senate’s confirmation of my appointment.”

In the letter, Haas outlines his extensive legal experience in the private and public sectors, including a decade of service to the State of Wisconsin in election administration. He notes that he was recently granted “interim secret clearance” by the Department of Homeland Security, which will permit federal officials to share classified information directly with him about potential cybersecurity and physical threats to Wisconsin’s elections infrastructure.

Haas also addresses concerns raised by some Senators related to his service at the former Government Accountability Board.

“Obviously, the Attorney General’s publication of a report related to investigations of the G.A.B. has rekindled strong feelings about that agency, and it is apparent that some Republican Senators require reassurance regarding my impartiality. My confirmation has become a lightning rod for any complaint ever lodged against the G.A.B., whether or not it was justified in the first place,” he wrote.

“The DOJ report merely indicates that I assisted in reviewing and minor editing of legal documents, not for the G.A.B.’s actual investigation but in subsequent litigation. If that is deemed a disqualifying act, then you must consider that I have also reviewed and edited many legal briefs and other court documents drafted by the Department of Justice for litigation

defending Wisconsin election laws. The Department of Justice has sometimes ended up on the losing side of those court decisions. And yet nobody has asked for the resignation of those DOJ attorneys or for my resignation because I assisted in defending laws enacted by the Legislature, simply because a court ruled against the State's legal position."

"It is certainly your prerogative to vote to confirm or not confirm my appointment, despite the qualifications and value I offer to the State and have outlined above. But doing so would not be based on an objective view of my credentials or the performance of the agency under my leadership. It would be based on a vague and unsubstantiated claim of "lack of confidence." This was not the message I received from almost all Senators during my introductory visits, and there is no valid reason for a change in that opinion based on the agency's performance since that time. We also know that there is no lack of confidence among either our customers or partners, or among the public. If there were, I would surely know about it, as clerks and the public have never been shy about expressing their concerns directly to the agency. Furthermore, no legislator has forwarded any concerns from constituents to me or the WEC regarding my qualifications or performance as Administrator of the WEC."

A copy of the letter and other supporting documentation are attached.

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The Wisconsin Elections Commission is responsible for administration and enforcement of election laws in Wisconsin. The Commission is made up of six Commissioners – four appointed directly by the State Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly and the Minority Leaders in the State Senate and Assembly. The remaining two Commissioners are by the Governor with confirmation by the State Senate from lists of former municipal and county clerks submitted by the legislative leadership in each party.