

ONE ON ONE



SPE



COUNTY ROOTS & CLEAR VISION

POSITION WISCONSIN
FOR SUCCESS

The air at the political rally held that day in 1978 was probably no different than any other gathering held today. Cheering people, colorful signs, the flash of cameras and an animated candidate at the podium.

With his bright red vest and friendly demeanor, Governor Lee Dreyfus knew how to hold an audience's attention. One person in the crowd was especially smitten: a young 10-year old boy from Burlington, Wisconsin, probably unaware of the role his attendance that fateful day would play in his life's journey.

"It all started that day," said Robin Vos, 63rd Assembly District State Representative and the newly elected Speaker of the Assembly for the 2013-2014 session. "My teacher Barbara Scheerer saw I was interested in politics and she would take me to political events. When I was sworn-in as Speaker on January 7th, she was there. It was a great moment."

—Michelle Gormican Thompson,
Thompson Communications



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Always confident in who he was, hardworking and a bit precocious, Speaker Vos stayed true to his passion through his formative years and when he was a senior in high school in 1986, he worked to elect Governor Tommy Thompson. As a student at UW-Whitewater, where he was majoring in political science and public relations, Vos served as the president of the College Republicans and was ultimately appointed by Governor Thompson to serve on the UW-Board of Regents.

"I was only the third student regent and the first to come from a non-doctoral campus," said Speaker Vos.

"It was a great opportunity and reinforced my belief that with tenacity and wherewithal, good things do happen."

During his time at UW-Whitewater, Robin lived with several roommates who would go on to create their own political successes today: Reince Preibus, Chairman of the Republican National Committee; Andy Speth, Chief of Staff for Congressman Paul Ryan and Jim Ladwig, Racine County Executive.

"It is funny how a group of college friends could all go on to make such big impacts in the arena of public service," said Speaker Vos. "We are still good friends



today and Reince was able to attend my swearing in at the Capitol, which saw things come full circle.”

Over the years, one family he grew close to was Jim and Bonnie Ladwig, Republican activists in Racine County. When Jim decided to run for the Assembly, Robin worked on his campaign and served as a legislative staffer while still in college.

In 1992, Bonnie decided to run for the 63rd Assembly District after her husband retired. Vos worked for her as staff until the fall of 1994, when he took a job as then-Congressman Mark Neumann’s District Director, a job he would do for one year before entering private business.

“I bought a popcorn company and the first year, I lost money,” said Speaker Vos with a laugh. “I regrouped, hired a sales rep and today, Rojo’s has 15 employees and provides popcorn and other concession supplies

throughout the country. I also own a car wash, have commercial interests and own residential properties in Whitewater.”

PUBLIC SERVICE

With his foray into private business came a desire to serve his community. In 1994, he ran for the Racine County Board, a position he would hold for 10 years.

“Counties are so important to keeping our communities thriving and there is no better place for a legislator to have come from than a county background,” he said. “Counties deal with all the big issues from criminal justice to economic development to social services to property tax levies. It is a great preparatory place for legislators and I value my time I served on the Racine County Board.”

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Top: Speaker Vos takes the oath of office with his hand on the Governor Dodge bible, which is being held by Wisconsin State Historical Society Director Ellsworth Brown. On the right, Supreme Court Justice David Prosser administers the oath. Bottom left: Former Speakers of the Assembly pose with Speaker Vos on inauguration day; from left to right – Froehlich, Jensen, Huebsch, J. Fitzgerald, Vos, Gard, Kunicki and Prosser. Bottom right: Representative Vos addresses the floor of the Wisconsin State Assembly.

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In 2004, at 11:30 a.m. one morning, a call came into Vos from Representative Bonnie Ladwig. She was announcing she would not be running for re-election and he had until 11:50 a.m. to decide if he was interested in the seat. If so, she would mention this desire in her media release.

"I walked around the block, thought about it and called her back," he said. "I ran unopposed, which was a gift because it allowed me to focus on nothing but the issues. I went door-to-door all over my district and spoke with thousands of people about the issues that were important to them such as taxes, education and social services. It allowed me to really get to know my constituents and every corner of my district before I stepped foot on the Assembly floor."

2013-2014 SESSION BEGINS WITH A VISION

Heading into this legislative session, Speaker Vos believes that the opportunities are ripe for counties to find efficiencies with stable resources. "It's not always easy, but it's been done successfully already by counties and other local units of government around the state," he said. "Intergovernmental cooperation will give counties tools to provide more efficient services and I believe at the state level we can figure out more ways to give local governments and businesses to do their jobs."

Speaker Vos has four main priorities for the next two years that he believes will position Wisconsin in an even

stronger position for the future: taxes, passage of a mining bill, a top-to-bottom review of administrative rules and regulations and education reforms.

"Our goals are to pass a balanced budget that doesn't raise taxes; pass a responsible mining bill that focuses on creating family sustaining jobs; review the more than 1,700 administrative rules and streamline these and finally, transform education," he said. "If school districts are failing, then we need to empower parents with more options to help their children succeed."

Amidst these legislative goals is Speaker Vos' desire to work in a bi-partisan manner within a legislative body that has seen a lot of turmoil to say the least in the last legislative session.

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With sleeves rolled up and ready to get to work, Speaker Vos has made one thing clear: it is not his intention to use his position to run for something else. "I don't want to be Governor or run for Congress. I love this job and I love the Legislature. We are most representative of the people and I plan to do everything I can to make the best of my time as speaker and make my constituents back home in Racine County proud." 📷