A Matter of Human Dignity

What are Wisconsin’s values? I often hear the phrase “We’re better than that” but are we? How many of you know Rep. Jimmy Anderson, Fitchburg of the 47th Assembly District? He is currently serving a second term in the legislature. He is a quadriplegic, a drunk driver rammed into the family car, Jimmy was the lone survivor.

At the end of his first term, during the lame duck session due to the scheduling of the assembly leadership, he developed pressure ulcers, and more as one would expect sitting in wheelchair for lengthy sessions. In February of this year he asked and was denied accommodations from Assembly Speaker Vos. He requested shorter sessions, specifically not any overnight sessions and the ability to call in on the phone for some early morning committee meetings. Assembly Speaker Vos denied. The Senate already does allow the call in.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law July 26, 1990 by President H.W. Bush. ADA states that Employers shall provide reasonable accommodations and work with modifications. ADA also states that one shouldn’t be refused participation due to disability. What was Speaker Vos doing? When Rep. Anderson asked for these accommodations, Speaker Vos called it “disruptive” and “political grandstanding.”

Assembly Speaker Vos chose to make this political - why would he do that? As someone who has worked in nursing for decades, it NEVER entered my mind to think how I would treat someone if they were ‘red’ or ‘blue.’ How low can the assembly go?

Sadly, all Republicans followed Vos like minions. I wrote to my Representative prior to the session asking him to use his voice on behalf of the victim and call out Speaker Vos’s childish behavior. Rep. Summerfield’s office responded after the session, stating that Rep. Summerfield is “happy to see a compromise.” There was no compromise. This summer at an event, Rep. Petryk expounded about his past work with disabilities, however he voted in support of Vos’s position. Rep. Betty Dittrich writes in her Blue Book bio. ’*Nationally published author and speaker with a special heart for the disabled and their families.* However, she too supported Assembly Speaker Vos. I could go on, but I think you get the idea.

This is the Wisconsin we live in. Are you willing to stand up and speak up for a better tomorrow?

Carolyn Kaiser

Elk Mound, WI