

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **CHAIR**

- Finance and Personnel Committee
- Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board
- Milwaukee Arts Board

### **VICE CHAIR**

- Steering and Rules Committee

### **MEMBER**

- Judiciary and Legislation Committee



**MICHAEL J. MURPHY**  
ALDERMAN, 10TH DISTRICT

# **Tone deaf appointment: Steve Baas to board chair of VISIT Milwaukee**

## **Statement of Alderman Michael J. Murphy June 9, 2020**

For taxpayers and Milwaukeeans who believe in inclusiveness and the sacred nature of our right to vote, it is outrageous that Steve Baas has been appointed as the new board chairman of VISIT Milwaukee.

Mr. Baas, a longtime Republican operative who has served for years as a senior vice president with the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, has been appointed to lead the board of directors of our city's key tourism and visitors bureau. VISIT is a critical organization charged with marketing Milwaukee to prospective event planners and those looking to hold a conference here. The majority of funding that VISIT receives is taxpayer generated.

Rewind to September 2016, when the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* published comments from Mr. Baas leaked from an investigation into state politics.

In a piece written by Daniel Bice (“**John Doe leak offers insights**”), a leaked document (email) quoted Mr. Baas discussing making up concerns about voter fraud in an effort to stir up the Republican base immediately after then-Supreme Court Justice David Prosser barely squeaked by challenger Joanne Kloppenburg in April 2011. In the April 6, 2011 email Mr. Baas states: “Do we need to start messaging ‘widespread reports of election fraud’ so we are positively set up for the recount regardless of the final number? I obviously think we should.”

As I noted at the time, the sad and cynical attempt by Mr. Baas – who was conversing at the time with, according to the article, “a group of conservative operatives,” including his boss at the time, GOP Assembly Speaker Scott Jensen – to manipulate public opinion by making stuff up, without any evidence of actual voter fraud, is dark and disturbing. The entire Voter ID effort at that time on the part of the state GOP was based on nearly non-existent voter fraud and was directly causing voter suppression among people of color, seniors, and even students.

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau indicated that the price tag to put in place Voter ID at that time cost taxpayers about \$6 million. What a colossal waste of taxpayer dollars.

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In a time of potentially significant change and awakening in terms of correcting injustices perpetrated against African Americans and people of color for decades, why in the world are we putting Steve Baas in charge of the board of directors of our top tourism entity?!

It is outrageous and his appointment should be immediately reconsidered by the VISIT Milwaukee board of directors.

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