Representative W. Carlton Weddington has one simple question for Governor John Kasich. Why is it that you are having such difficulties finding a minority to serve in your cabinet but it took Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted no time to find an African American to serve in his office?

By IKE MGBATOGU
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COLUMBUS – Representative W. Carlton Weddington has one simple question for Governor John Kasich. Why is it that you are having such difficulties finding a minority to serve in your cabinet but it took Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted no time to find an African American to serve in his office?

Husted, last week hired, the immediate former Director of Ohio Department of Job and Family

Services Doug Lumpkin as his Chief Operating Officer.

Weddington's question comes after Lumpkin's hiring, followed by the announcement that Kasich has appointed Michael Colbert, an African-American, to serve as the Director of Job and Family Services and by the naming of Lynn Stevens, another African American, as his Director of Minority Affairs.

"He finally got a clue," said Weddington, of Kasich, in an interview with the Call & Post last week. "We encourage him to continue to diversify his cabinet and his office as we seek to address the issues facing Ohio."

Weddington is part of a chorus of Ohio lawmakers decrying Kasich's "poor judgment." He wondered how the governor could claim he could not find qualified African-Americans but, then quicker than you can say "plenty of Blacks are qualified," he stumble on Colbert under his nose.

"It is not about Democrats or Republicans, but people who can do the work," he said. "We don't want to go back to the 1960s."

But even though Kasich in the long run hired a minority, the brouhaha over the diversity of his cabinet, for Weddington, is not over. He is concerned that the foot-dragging that played out before hiring a minority to his cabinet could reveal something deeper at work across state government.

"Is this an issue that transcends throughout the Republican office holders?" he asked.

Besides the governor's office, the Republican Party is also in control of both chambers of the legislature, the Ohio Senate and the House, plus all the statewide elective offices. Even the Ohio Supreme Court, which recently welcomed a new Black justice Democrat Yvette McGee Brown, is Republican-controlled.

With Republicans practically running the state, Weddington is keeping an eye on their hiring practices.

Last week, he filed a public records request with Kasich's administration, Attorney-General, Secretary of State, Treasurer of State, Auditor of State, and Ohio Supreme Court, "to find out what their hiring looks like in terms of their top 15 paid positions."

"The public has a right to know the record on hiring of these offices and whether they, in practice, embrace diversity in the workplace or are potentially discriminating against people of color," said Weddington.

Decrying the practice of denying minorities jobs as "shortsighted," he refuses to believe that there are no minorities interested in these jobs.

"The issue is not that these offices should hire minorities but that it is inconceivable that no qualified person of color applied for any of these top positions."

Weddington said that data from his request will help keep track of whether hiring for top office holders are upholding the egalitarian virtues of diversity.

"By reviewing the information I am requesting today, we can quantify hiring practices of these offices," said Weddington.

So far, according to Weddington, the Secretary of State Husted and Auditor of State Dave Yost have responded to his request.

Others have not, including the governor's office, he said.

Weddington's endeavor in all of this is propelled by his view that the "administration should look like the state in terms of representation." He said Kasich's cabinet should "mirror the state," not just in terms of ethnicity but also that experience should be considered alongside, "age, gender, religion. All these things should be considered to bring together the best of the best minds."

Kasich, said Weddington, "cannot have a monolithic all White males and a few White females cabinet running the state of Ohio."

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, noted Weddington, a Democrat from Columbus, "African Americans make up 12.1 percent of the 11,542,645 people living in Ohio, and Hispanics comprise 2.8 percent of the state's population."

"Collectively, African-Americans, Native Americans, Asians, Hispanics and people of mixed ancestry, comprise 18.2 percent of Ohio's total population," said Weddington.

It's not as though Kasich is not aware of all that. He is. But, he has said on numerous occasions that he is opposed to "quotas" and was not looking to assemble a diverse cabinet but a competent one.

As for the governor's view that he'll be judged on the basis of his appointments over the four year duration of his administration and not now, Weddington disagreed, saying, "You begin your legacy on day one. His poor judgment will speak for itself."

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