

Speaker Dean Plocher Spotlight

Speaker Dean Plocher converted an office into a liquor ‘pantry’ and spent \$60,000 in taxpayer money renovating the speaker’s office, including expensive furniture and a custom cabinet for a \$2,500 refrigerator. The Missouri Independent reported, “House Speaker Dean Plocher took over that space and converted it into what has been jokingly referred to as his ‘butler’s pantry,’ a makeshift storage room stocked with liquor, beer, wine and soda to complement the supply in his office. The move was part of a \$60,000 renovation of Plocher’s office in late 2022 and early 2023, paid for with public funds by the House. Half the costs stemmed from expenses resulting from repairs to walls, baseboards and ceilings in the speaker’s office. The other half, according to records obtained by The Independent through Missouri’s Sunshine Law, went towards new furnishings — to the tune of about \$29,000, including \$8,600 for a black leather sofa and armchairs, \$2,500 for a new walnut table, \$2,500 for a refrigerator with an ice maker, \$5,000 for a custom cabinet to hold the refrigerator and \$385 for two walnut trash can bins.” [Missouri Independent, [12/20/2023](#)]

Speaker Dean Plocher claimed banning medical care for transgender youth was “protecting children.” MissouriNet reported Plocher said, “I don’t think this body, this caucus has any disdain for anybody, okay. What we’re doing is protecting children from undergoing what we determined, we believe, is harmful procedures when you’re a teenager. To be given drugs to become permanently sterile, to change your body when you’re a teenager, you can’t even lawfully drive, or drink, or vote and they’re asking you to be able to do that to a child. I think that’s entirely wrong.” [MissouriNet, [5/15/2023](#)]

According to a draft ethics report, Dean Plocher obstructed the investigation by blocking subpoenas and intimidating witnesses. The Missouri House Ethics Committee voted to reject 6 to 2 a draft report that found no direct evidence to support Plocher’s ethical violation, but the document painted a portrait of an obstructed investigation. Plocher, through his office, fought against subpoenas issued by the committee to compel witnesses to testify. Ethics Chair Hannah Kelly made a statement claiming Plocher took steps to “threaten witnesses, block our investigation, and prevent this process from reaching its natural conclusion” and that he created a “culture of fear and retaliation” that made a concerning environment in the House. The draft report includes letters sent between Plocher’s general counsel and Kelly’s office showing that Plocher’s office denied the committee’s request for subpoenas to compel witnesses, and one witness described being “highly encouraged” not to testify and feared her employment was at risk. It also showed that Plocher, as Speaker, has the power to sign off on subpoenas issued by the committee, but he did not recuse himself from that in the investigation connected to himself, further delaying the investigation. Plocher refused to cooperate with the attorney hired to collect evidence for the committee. According to the draft report, on March 13th, Plocher’s general counsel unlocked and entered the Ethic Committee’s hearing meeting room with laptops to “take photographs.” [Kansas City Star, [4/29/2024](#); Kansas City Star; [4/17/2024](#); Kansas City Star, [4/15/2024](#); Missouri Independent, [4/15/2024](#)]

After allegations that Dean Plocher obstructed the investigation, the investigation was dismissed without being completed. The Missouri House Ethics Committee voted 7 to 2 to dismiss the complaint of ethical misconduct against Plocher, with Ethics Chair Hannah Kelly and Ethics Vice Chair Robert Sauls voting “no.” Kelly stated the investigation could not be completed as “a direct result of obstruction” and “intimidation of witnesses” by Plocher. Kelly intended to hold the meeting in a hearing room that could be live-streamed, but Plocher’s leadership had the House clerk’s office move it to a room without cameras. She started to read an email from a House employee about Plocher’s retaliation efforts but was cut off from reading the email over ‘confidentiality concerns.’ The email from Lori Hughes, director of administration for the Missouri House, was obtained from the Independent includes, “In my over 21 years of state government service, I have never witnessed or even been involved in such a hostile work environment that is so horrible that I am living in fear every day of losing my job”. Plocher called himself a victim of “bureaucratic revolt” and compared himself to Trump. The rejected ethics report could not find direct evidence that Plocher committed ethical violations, and the only punishment it recommended was a letter of disapproval, but the complaint was dismissed. [Kansas City Star, [4/29/2024](#); Missouri Independent, [4/29/2024](#)]