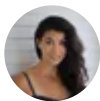


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NEWS

Wisconsin Right to Life calls allegations against Sortwell 'serious,' adds he resigned as Brown County chapter leader following allegations



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A day after the Green Bay Press-Gazette first reported on child abuse charges referred by the Green Bay Police Department against Rep. Shae Sortwell, the leader of Wisconsin Right to Life said the lawmaker "voluntarily resigned from his role" as its Brown County chapter following the abuse allegations.

"Wisconsin Right to Life condemns any form of child abuse against born and unborn children," said Heather Weininger, executive director of Wisconsin Right to Life, in a statement released Wednesday afternoon. "The allegations made against Rep. Shae Sortwell in 2013 are serious and should be left in the hands of the appropriate authorities."

Weininger continued, "While this incident happened prior to my time at Wisconsin Right to Life, it is my understanding that following the allegations, Rep. Sortwell voluntarily resigned from his role as part of the Brown County Chapter of Wisconsin Right to Life."

Weininger became the group's legislative director in September 2013 and its executive director in July 2014. Sortwell had previously worked as a legislative aide for Weininger's husband, former Assembly Rep. Chad Weininger. He is now Brown County's director of administration.

The police investigation against Sortwell began on Jan. 6, 2013, when a relative became concerned over several bruises on his child's body. By the end of the month, Green Bay police officers had referred charges to the Brown County District Attorney's Office.

On an unknown date in 2013, Sortwell accepted the role as the pro-life group's Brown County chair. And while charges were referred against him in the first month of the year, Weininger

said in the statement that Sortwell resigned "following the allegations."

The resignation date was not provided in the statement. Despite Weininger stating that Sortwell resigned, Sortwell was still listing his role with the pro-life group in campaign material in his runup to the 2018 Assembly race. Besides a statement provided to the Press-Gazette through the Green Bay Police Department via an open records request, Sortwell has declined

She further distanced the anti-abortion group from the Republican lawmaker from Gibson by stating Wisconsin Right to Life's State political action committee has never endorsed Sortwell in any of his races for public office.

On Tuesday, the Green Bay Press-Gazette published a story that revealed Sortwell was investigated for allegations of child abuse in 2013 after bruises on one of his children so concerned a relative they contacted police, who recommended he be charged with a felony.

Sortwell explained to police that the Bible commanded him to strike his children as punishment and if he didn't he was "not teaching what needs to be taught," according to records obtained by the Press-Gazette from the Green Bay Police Department.

But Sortwell, who would be elected to the state Assembly in 2018 and now serves on the Assembly's Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, was never charged, a decision the Brown County District Attorney's Office didn't explain until recently in response to a Press-Gazette inquiry.

This is a developing story.

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