

# The Gazette

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## County supervisor says 'slip of tongue' has drawn harassment

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JANESVILLE — Rock County Board member Brian Knudson is trying to clear his name after not clearly stating his stance on child sex trafficking during a county committee meeting in May.

As that is playing out, he and other county board members are being denounced as “bad

Brian Knudson has reported having people run up to him while he is in his car and others call him names at local businesses.

guys” in literature being circulated throughout Rock County for not approving a resolution designating a “Stand Against Illegal Immigration and Child Sex Trafficking Week.”

At the county’s May 26 Public Safety and Justice Committee meeting, Knudson spoke against child sex trafficking and against the resolution up for a vote that night, but accidentally

omitted the word “not.” That has led to him to be directly quoted in flyers being distributed throughout the county in people’s mailboxes, in local businesses and outside a local movie theater as, in fact, being in favor of child sex trafficking.

“I misspoke. I could have sworn on the Bible I didn’t,” Knudson said. “I was reading

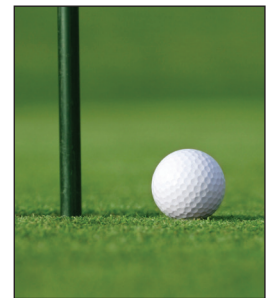
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### STATE

Summerfest attendance up over 2022  
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### SPORTS

Dunk third in state amateur tournament at Janesville Country Club.  
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## SUMMER BLUES

A crowd filled Courthouse Park in downtown Janesville Tuesday, July 11, to listen to Cash Box Kings play Chicago blues as part of the free Music at the Marv concert series at the Marvin W. Roth Community Pavilion. Music at the Marv is every Tuesday night at 6:30 p.m., through Sept. 5.



PHOTOS BY KARYN SAEMANN/ADAMS PUBLISHING GROUP

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## Wisconsin Supreme Court poised to take up controversial issues

**CLINT WOLF**  
Adams Publishing Group

BELOIT — In just under three weeks, the Wisconsin Supreme Court will welcome its newest justice, which will shift the court to a liberal majority — something that hasn’t happened in more than a decade.

Janet Protasiewicz will be sworn in as the new Supreme Court Justice on Aug. 1 and court watchers expect some issues such as how legislative district boundaries are drawn, voting rules and an abortion law that dates back to 1849 could be some of the issues the new court will review.

Stacie Rosenzweig, a 1997

graduate of Beloit College and a 2009 graduate of Marquette University Law School, is one of the court watchers who will be interested to see what rulings will come out of the newly transformed court.

Rosenzweig, who is a shareholder in the law firm of Halling and Cayo in Milwaukee, said this

will be the first time the court has had a liberal majority in the 14 years she has been practicing law. However, she noted just because a justice is perceived to be conservative or liberal, that doesn’t necessarily predict how they will rule in every situation.



Rosenzweig

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**COUNTY/**from A1

the title of the resolution. I am certainly not in favor of child sex trafficking.”

Knudson has reported having people run up to him while he is in his car and others call him names at local businesses. He has said he has been harassed through email, and his family has been harassed.

“If you were a child sex trader or a child sex offender, would you say it in a public meeting? No,” Knudson said. “I would never do anything to harm a child.”

Flyers have been distributed throughout the county in people’s mailboxes, in businesses and outside a local movie theater via solicitation quoting Knudson, citing that meeting, when he accidentally omitted a word when he tried to denounce child sex trafficking.

There’s even a “petition” circulating for the Rock County Board “to help stop child sex trafficking” with a goal of “10,000 signatures” with a Janesville P.O. box listed, but with no name on it.

Knudson said he is worried that his charity will suffer, or even cease to exist. Knudson started that charity, Children’s Christmas Benefit, 25 years ago.

The next county board meeting is this Thursday, July 13, at 6 p.m. at the Rock County Courthouse. Knudson said he consulted an attorney to craft a prepared statement and said “I am not speaking from the hip this time.”

The resolution he was speaking out against was “Stand Against Illegal Immigration and Child Sex Trafficking Week,” proposed by Beloit area County Board member Mike Zoril.

Knudson was attempting to lead into his point about how the resolution would not do anything to combat illegal immigration or child sex trafficking. He also said some of the language in the resolution was “fluff.”

Flyers have been distributed throughout the county in people’s mailboxes, in businesses and outside a local movie theater via solicitation quoting Knudson, citing that meeting, when he accidentally omitted a word when he tried to denounce child sex trafficking.

“Let’s take care of the business of our own county,” Knudson said at the time. “Instead, since we know it’s an issue, let’s get out there and get out on the street and get involved. It’s easy to talk about it. Get involved with the people instead of pitting us against each other making political statements and making general statements like, ‘may do this.’”

Public Safety and Justice Chairperson Mary Beaver, who was listed as one of the “15 bad guys” on one of the flyers, said she wasn’t aware of either of the pieces of literature and couldn’t comment on either, but felt bad for Knudson.

“I feel terrible about what’s going on. He’s such a nice man. I know that’s not the intent of what he meant to say,” Beaver said.

Zoril said he was not aware of the harassment that Knudson was receiving nor was he aware of the flyers circulating the county. He declined to comment.

At least two types of flyers have been distributed, one of which has reportedly been put in people’s mailboxes in Knudson’s district. Knudson serves the village of Orfordville, and Plymouth, and the towns of Magnolia, Avon, Newark and Spring Valley.

He said he has been in contact with the village of Footville postmaster about flyers there. That flyer has “Urgent Parent & Grandparent Alert!” in all capital letters across the top with the line “Protect your children from child sex traffickers & arrogant county board supervisor Brian Knudson” underneath it.”

Also in that flyer, there is a box with dashed lines urging people to see “The Sound of Freedom,” a religious film about child sex trafficking that has been shown at Movies 16 in Janesville.

A second flyer, which was spotted by a Gazette reporter at a Janesville laundromat Monday, has the draft of the Stand Against Child Sex Trafficking and Illegal Immigration Week resolution with handwriting such as “shame on the Rock Co. Board.” It has a second page with a list of “15 bad guys” who voted for postponing the resolution and “11 good guys” who voted not to postpone the resolution. That had a sheet of paper urging people to watch “The Sound of Freedom.”

The second flyer quotes county board member Jim Farrell denouncing the resolution but leaves out context. He made the point that child sex trafficking and illegal immigration are issues, but he felt as though they were not appropriate for the county board to prioritize over other issues locally.

During the meeting, Farrell said, “I don’t think some of the new board members understand their roles on the county board. This is a federal issue. I’m 76 years old. Don’t waste my time. There’s issues of homelessness. There’s issues of poverty.”

Farrell could not be

reached for this article.

The resolution penned by Zoril at the time drew criticism because it linked illegal immigration and child sex traffickers. Zoril submitted it after an earlier resolution he submitted, “Stand Against Illegal Immigration,” failed. That, too, received criticism because it was submitted after the county board approved a “Stand Against Racism” resolution.

Also, the original draft of the Zoril’s resolution stated that the county would have supported “NumbersUSA in its practices to set annual immigration at a level that allows for the stabilization of U.S. population.”

The Public Safety and Justice Committee struck that and all references to NumbersUSA because of concerns the county could be

tied to “racism.” NumbersUSA was founded in 1996 by John Tanton, who is detailed as “anti-immigrant” by the Southern Poverty Law Center, a Montgomery, Alabama-based organization that tracks U.S. hate groups.

Although it doesn’t label NumbersUSA as a hate group, it labels it as one of the “Big Three” of a network of organizations that Tanton either helped found, founded or funded. In the network, six are labeled as hate groups, three of which he founded, all “anti-immigrant.”

Zoril has said that the resolution focused on a county issue because unaccompanied minors are entering the U.S. and could end up in Rock County.

# The Gazette

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