

# [***Florida GOP removes Christian Ziegler from party chairmanship amid sexual assault investigation***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B2C-K8V1-DY7V-G00N-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Florida's Republican Party has removed Christian Ziegler as party chairman amid a sex scandal and [*a sexual assault investigation*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/30/politics/florida-gop-chair-investigation/index.html).

"No one voted for Christian Ziegler," said Blaise Ingoglia, former Republican Party of Florida Chairman and current member of the Florida Senate.

Ziegler, who has not been criminally charged, did not attend the meeting. CNN reached out to Ziegler for comment.

The removal came after state party leadership [*suspended Ziegler and removed all his authority*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/17/politics/christian-ziegler-florida-gop-censure/index.html) last month.

Florida party members voted to replace Ziegler with Evan Power, who had been the party vice's chairman. Florida Congressmen Matt Gaetz and Byron Donalds attended the meeting, along with Florida's Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nunez.

Ziegler has been under investigation by the Sarasota Police Department since October. According to a search warrant affidavit, which CNN first obtained from the Florida Center for Government Accountability, Ziegler and his wife, Bridget, planned a three-way sexual encounter with the alleged victim on the day of the alleged assault on October 2, 2023, and "when the victim learned that Bridget could not make it, she changed her mind and canceled with Christian." The Zieglers allegedly had a previous consensual sexual relationship with the accuser, according to the affidavit.

Surveillance video showed Christian Ziegler arriving at the alleged victim's residence on the day of the alleged assault, the affidavit says. The alleged victim said he entered the apartment and raped her on a bar stool, according to the affidavit.

Police in Sarasota are also investigating if Ziegler broke Florida's video voyeurism laws by recording the sexual encounter at the center of the investigation.

Ziegler has said the sex was consensual. In a statement to CNN last month, his attorney, Derek Byrd, said he would be cleared of wrongdoing. "We are confident that once the police investigation is concluded that no charges will be filed and Mr. Ziegler will be completely exonerated," Byrd said.

Ziegler had [*faced calls to resign*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/03/politics/florida-gop-chair-defies-desantis-wont-step-down-as-new-details-of-sexual-assault-allegation-emerge/index.html) from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, Sen. Rick Scott and Gaetz. Last month, Florida's Republican Party reduced Ziegler's salary to $1 annually and took away his ability to hire or fire staff; speak on behalf of the Florida GOP; or raise funds for the party, even as he retained his title as chairman.

The Zieglers are Florida Republican political stalwarts. The couple rose from their base of power in Sarasota County into significant statewide figures under DeSantis.

Christian Ziegler became chairman of the Florida GOP in February after years working in local ***politics***, including as a county commissioner and as state party vice chairman. Bridget Ziegler was appointed to the Sarasota County School Board in 2014 and has won reelection three times. The school board voted last month to ask her to resign. The move is non binding and she has given no indication that she plans to step down.

Bridget Ziegler has been on the forefront of the cultural battles DeSantis has waged within Florida public schools. She co-founded [*Moms for Liberty*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/06/30/politics/moms-for-liberty-2024/index.html), a conservative parents' rights organization that has led the efforts in Florida and elsewhere to remove books from classrooms they deem inappropriate for kids. DeSantis named her to the board that now oversees the Walt Disney Company's [*special taxing district*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/27/politics/desantis-disney-reedy-creek/index.html) in Central Florida amid his clash with the entertainment giant over a state law that restricted how sexual orientation and gender identity could be taught in the classroom.

This story has been updated with additional details.

CNN's Jack Forrest, [*Daniel Strauss*](https://www.cnn.com/profiles/daniel-strauss) and [*Allison Gordon*](https://www.cnn.com/profiles/allison-gordon) contributed to this report.

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