

# [***Wisconsin School Search for 'Christian' Superintendent Sparks Backlash***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BSM-V0B1-JBR6-92HG-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Length:** 688 words

**Byline:** Nick Mordowanec

**Highlight:** A rescinded desired characteristic of a Wisconsin school district's new superintendent has sparked calls for lawsuits based on the Civil Rights Act.

**Body**

A Wisconsin school district has rescinded a requirement for its next superintendent to espouse "conservative, Christian values" after backlash from the public.

A job listing for the Cedar Grove-Belgium School District in Sheboygan County has been edited after another former local superintendent noticed the wording, which drew attention not just from locals but across social media.

The school board listed myriad criteria they desired in their next superintendent, including traditional characteristics like being approachable, being a strong mentor for students and staff, and being available to communicate with the public at large, according to a graphic posted by Wisconsin Public Radio's (WPR) Corri Hess on Thursday to X, formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

One line in the graphic states that the candidate "must match the makeup of our community," specifically listing [*"conservative, Christian values."*](https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-selling-bibles-christians-fury-1883972?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)

It was subsequently removed, said Cedar Grove-Belgium School Board President Chad Hoopman, who according to Hess in an X post said he realized that it could give off the wrong impression.

"That is why the search firm chose to remove that comment," Hoopman said, neglecting to say whether the decision was made before or after public sentiment.

*Newsweek* reached out to Hoopman via email for comment.

The post was flagged after a local former superintendent in another district, Carol Topinka, became privy to it through a friend, prompting her to email Mike Richie with the Illinois-based Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates law firm who was hired to lead the search.

The firm's website says it has served more than 1,600 clients since its inception in 1987, offering services including superintendent searches and K-12 job searches.

"Help me understand how a public school district can legally limit its hiring to people who are Christians?" Topinka wrote in an email obtained by WPR. "My mentee is not a Christian and is frankly gobsmacked that a public school district can blatantly and prejudicially flout the law."

Richie reportedly responded within a half hour, writing: "Thanks for your email. That was a comment made during the focus groups and you are correct that should not have been in the report. It will be removed. Thanks."

*Newsweek* reached out to Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates law firm for comment.

Ryan Cox, legal director with The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Wisconsin, told WPR that it plans to investigate and will "take appropriate action to enforce the law as the facts require."

"The Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it illegal for employers to [*discriminate on the basis of religion*](https://www.newsweek.com/faithful-america-condemn-clarence-thomas-samuel-alito-1875306?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships), including in the recruitment phase," Cox said. "The ACLU of Wisconsin is extremely concerned that a public body might be attempting to apply a religious test as a condition of employment, or even as a preferred 'qualification.'"

*Newsweek* reached out to the ACLU of Wisconsin via email for comment.

Local community newspaper *Ozaukee Press* wrote in a [*Facebook*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/facebook?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) post that the district's search remains ongoing.

"The first round of candidates didn't closely enough match the profile determined by the district, thus Monday's meeting to meet the finalists has been canceled," said the post from six days ago.

"Your post for a superintendent must be a conservative and have Christian values is illegal as heck," wrote user John Goerner on one of the school district's Facebook posts. "I hope you get sued."

Other posts, meanwhile, have been limited by administrators.

"Thumbing their noses at the Constitution, trustees of the Cedar Grove-Belgium School District in Sheboygan County, Wis., seek a new school superintendent," wrote journalist David Cay Johnston on X on Friday morning. "They require 'conservative, Christian values.'"

Representative Mark Pocan, a Wisconsin Democrat, attributed it to ***politics***.

"This is what you get in the Trump era - a complete disregard for the Civil Rights Act of 1964," he wrote on X on Thursday. "You can't [*hire based on religion*](https://www.newsweek.com/texas-bishop-slams-greg-abbott-says-christians-have-duty-resist-1884548?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) for a public position."

"How about a requirement that school board members actually have read the constitution?" asked conservative Charlie Sykes on Thursday on X.

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2377678/superintendent.jpg)

**Graphic**

Superintendent

Getty Images

A Wisconsin school district is getting blowback after posting desired characteristics of a new superintendent, suggesting hiring someone who espoused "conservative, Christian values."

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