

One Wisconsin Now: Lowell Holtz expected 'Outside Groups' to handle fundraising and organizing for his campaign for Superintendent of Public Instruction

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MADISON, Wis. — In attempting to absolve himself of responsibility for discussions he had about a potential election bribe, candidate for State Superintendent of Public Instruction Lowell Holtz cited unnamed “business leaders” as the instigators of scheme. Claiming someone else is doing the work for him is apparently not limited to the election bribe caper, according to records obtained by One Wisconsin Now. In emails in the lead up to his candidacy, Holtz, using his school district account, relayed how an “outside group” would be doing his campaign work for him. Following his second place finish in the primary, Holtz invited outside spending on his behalf.

“A campaign is like a job interview and in no uncertain terms Lowell Holtz is tanking it,” commented One Wisconsin Now Research Director Jenni Dye. “So far he’s shown us an abysmal lack of ethics and commitment to public service in pursuit of his personal political ambitions and enrichment. Now we find out he never even intended to do work on his own campaign, claiming that outside groups were going to do the organizing and fundraising for him.”

In emails obtained by One Wisconsin Now, sent from Holtz’s official account as a public employee of the Whitnall School District, he discussed his impending retirement and his future plans. He bragged that he had been recruited to run for Superintendent of Public Instruction by a “reform group” and further claimed they would be doing “all of the fundraising, organizing, etc.” for his race. [A copy of the email is available here.](#)

In the lead up to the February 21 primary election, controversy exploded when John Humphries, running against Holtz, revealed that the pair had met in December 2016 to discuss a deal intended to get one of them to support the other candidate. [One Wisconsin Now filed a complaint with the Wisconsin Elections Commission](#) alleging that the deal they discussed was not just sleazy but possibly illegal. The complaint asks that Holtz, Humphries and other unnamed parties be investigated for possible violations of state laws prohibiting election related bribery.

The scheme, which Holtz claims was concocted at the urging of unnamed “business leaders,” would have provided the candidate who agreed to support the other a guaranteed job at the Department of Public Instruction for three years at an annual taxpayer-funded salary of \$150,000. They would have been provided with a chauffeur and full state benefits, a total compensation package likely worth over \$500,000. The proposed job would give the recipient complete control over specified school districts. A document provided to the media indicated that Holtz sought to exercise power over the Milwaukee, Madison, Racine and Kenosha districts, adding that Green Bay would be “negotiable.”

Dye concluded, “Decency, personal responsibility and commitment to public service were already out the window with Lowell Holtz after the revelations of his involvement in scheming to either be bought off or to buy off his opponent with taxpayers dollars. And now with his plan to let someone else pull the strings and have outside groups raise him money and organize his campaign, we can add work ethic to the list of ethics this guy lacks.”