

# One Wisconsin Now: Video of State Senate hopeful Shannon Zimmerman's University lecture raises red flags about attitude toward women and sexual assault

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MADISON, Wis. — As an “Executive in Residence” at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, now-State Representative Shannon Zimmerman gave a lecture in which he commented, in response to a question, that “woman” was the hardest language to translate because, “Sometimes she says this, but she means this ...” Zimmerman, who has announced his candidacy for the vacant 10th District State Senate seat, at the time owned a company that provided language translation services.

One Wisconsin Now Research Director Joanna Beilman-Dulin commented, “At a time when more and more women are speaking out about sexual harassment and abuse they’ve experienced, Shannon Zimmerman’s statement that women shouldn’t be believed is a huge red flag.”

According to a media report and video of the lecture, an audience member asked, “What’s the most difficult language that you translate and why is that the most difficult language to translate?”

Zimmerman responded, “Oh wow. Angel, what do you think here? I mean. You know, I guess my answer would be this. There’s varying degrees of complexity by language. Sometimes I would say it’s my employees’ language. It’s woman, right? ... Sometimes she says this, but she means this. No. (Zimmerman laughter) ...”

After the public release of the video and the media reports, Zimmerman did not apologize for his statements, but instead explained it was, “...a lighthearted attempt to address the communication barriers that exist ...” He also via Twitter claimed the release of the video of his speech was because of the “strength of his campaign.”

“‘No means no’ is never a joke and it is completely unacceptable for a man in a position of authority as Rep. Zimmerman was, giving a lecture in an official capacity at a state university, to make these kinds of comments. We don’t need him to try explain away what he said, we deserve an apology,” concluded Beilman-Dulin.