

# Hagedorn, Neubauer clash in first debate over who voters can trust

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Conservative Supreme Court candidate Brian Hagedorn accused rival Lisa Neubauer Friday in their first debate of aligning with special interests, claiming she would turn the court into a “liberal playground.”

Neubauer, meanwhile, fired back that Hagedorn had already tipped his hand as to how he would decide cases through past blog posts, which argued a U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down an anti-sodomy law could open the door to legalizing bestiality, and for his association with a school that bars employees and students from being in a same-sex relationship. She questioned whether voters could trust Hagedorn to be fair and impartial.

“The blog writings are extensive,” she said. “They are on key constitutional issues that have great impact on people’s lives, and my opponent has not only written about these issues, he has acted upon them.”

Hagedorn called Neubauer’s attacks “shameful” and defended his writings, saying that previous media reports about his blog posts were “making me say something I never said.” He also noted that the policies at Augustine Academy, the private Christian school he helped found, were “similar to what you’d find at schools of faith across the state.”

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Several times during the debate, Hagedorn sought to tie Neubauer to retiring liberal Justice Shirley Abrahamson, who the two are vying April 2 to replace.

He never identified Abrahamson by name, but said at various points that she had politicized the court. Hagedorn also recalled arguing cases before the Supreme Court, saying he believed Abrahamson had already made up her mind about how to

rule before he walked into court. He warned that Neubauer would be cut from the same cloth and argued that would poison public trust by politicizing the court.

Neubauer turned that attack around, repeatedly hammering Hagedorn for his work as Gov. Scott Walker's attorney and warning of his affiliation with the Republican party.

Hagedorn, though, argued his work for Walker, stating that his job as an attorney was to "zealously defend" the interests of his client.

Friday's debate, sponsored by the Wisconsin State Bar, WISC-TV and WisPolitics.com was the first time the two met head-to-head leading into next month's election. Throughout the hour long debate, Hagedorn accused Neubauer of failing to offer specifics, while she repeatedly stressed her experience and that the vast majority judges who have endorsed in the race are backing her.

Hagedorn said he was honored to have the support of five past and current Supreme Court justices. He also downplayed why his website didn't list support from any circuit or court or municipal judges.

"I've got all kinds of support," Hagedorn said. "Just because it's not on my website doesn't mean it's not there."

Neubauer, meanwhile, lists no support from current or past Supreme Court justices. But she repeatedly pivoted to talk about her support from 345 judges across the state. She said that represented 98 percent of judges justices who had chosen to endorse one of the candidates in the race. With a base of support that broad, she said, she was drawing on judges from both Republican and Democratic districts. She also had a dig at her rival, noting that her supporters were "willing to support me publicly, I have put them on my website."

Hagedorn was more willing at times to go into details on past court decisions and his influences. For example, he pointed to conservative U.S. Supreme Court justices Clarence Thomas and Neil Gorsuch, along with the late Justice Antonin Scalia, as influences. Neubauer declined to name any, pointing instead to her record and experience.

The candidates did find a few points of consensus though. Both agreed that *Roe v. Wade* — the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case legalizing abortion — was settled

law, though Hagedorn included the caveat “until such time as the U.S. Supreme Court decides to change something.”

Both judges also said though coordination between campaigns and outside groups was deemed legal by the state Supreme Court in 2015, their campaigns were not coordinating with any special interest groups.

Hagedorn several times knocked Neubauer for the support she’s receiving from former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and his organization.

Speaking with reporters after the debate, Neubauer said she hadn’t heard he was stumping for in her the state “until I read it in the paper.”

[Watch the debate.](#)