

# One Wisconsin Now: State Budget blunder shines light on Brian Hagedorn's dim view of open records

Posted on Thursday, Mar 14, 2019

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MEDIA CONTACT  
Mike Browne, Deputy Director  
[mike@OneWisconsinNow.org](mailto:mike@OneWisconsinNow.org)  
[\(608\) 444-3483](tel:(608)444-3483)

## As Government Lawyer Hagedorn Fought Release of Records, Implicated in Effort to Gut State Open Records Law

MADISON, Wis. — As a top government lawyer, Wisconsin Supreme Court candidate Brian Hagedorn was at the center of some of the most notorious efforts to evade and gut Wisconsin's open records law. In 2015, while legal counsel for the governor Hagedorn was the attorney of record in a lawsuit brought over the denial of government records. His office was also implicated for involvement in the drafting of a last minute provision to gut the state open records law majority Republicans were forced to back away from after attempting to insert it in the 2015 state budget.

"Brian Hagedorn has shown he holds dim views of transparency and openness in government," said One Wisconsin Now Research Director Joanna Beilman-Dulin. "While a top lawyer in the governor's office he was at the center of denying access to records and scheming to gut the state open records law."

As part of the 2015 budget introduced by Hagedorn's former boss, then Gov. Scott Walker, a provision was included to eliminate the "Wisconsin Idea", a mission statement guiding the University of Wisconsin System. After a public uproar, Gov. Walker attempted to excuse its inclusion in his budget as a "drafting error."

Attempts to get the real story were stymied by Hagedorn, who blocked the release of certain records by claiming they were subject to a "deliberative process privilege" that is not part of the state open records law. The group requesting the records, the Center for Media and Democracy, [subsequently sued](#) and Hagedorn served as counsel of record for the Governor, defending keeping the documents secret from May 2015 through his judicial appointment.

In that same budget, legislative Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee approved [sweeping open records changes](#) which would have gutted Wisconsin's open records law. Among the changes was an exemption to keep so-called "deliberative materials", like those Hagedorn was attempting to keep from the public, secret. It was soon after revealed [Gov. Walker's office was involved in drafting those changes](#), in fact those limits were added the same day the drafting attorney spoke to the governor's assistant legal counsel, who worked alongside Hagedorn.

More recently, Hagedorn bragged about his years working as legal counsel in the governor's office claiming, he was the "chief ethics" advisor in the Walker administration. He is also continuing to stonewall the release of documents related to paid speeches he gave to a hate group while a sitting judge.

Beilman-Dulin concluded, "If we take Brian Hagedorn at his word, he was a central figure in shameful secrecy schemes to try to keep the public business from the public."