

WisDems: Tim Michels' business lacks diversity

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MADISON, Wis. — Tim Michels has centered his campaign for governor around his business experience, touting his role at his family business as “proven executive experience.”

[Public records and court filings](#) tell a more troubling story about the culture Tim Michels oversaw at Michels Corp.

Michels' “proven” experience includes running a corporation [that does not prioritize diversity in hiring](#), particularly in the highest rungs of the organization, in which 97.8% of managerial staff is white. Overall, public records show Michels Corp was, at its most diverse, 88% white, and Michels Corp's racial diversity in the past decade was far worse than national construction industry averages. Additionally, under Michels' leadership, cases of sexual assault, harassment, and racial discrimination against female and minority workers were reported. Michels previously described himself as “responsible for everything” at Michels Corp, including worker “safety.”

Tim Michels has centered his campaign on his business experience, but the more voters learn about Michels Corp, the more clear it becomes that he's not the leader Wisconsin needs.

Milwaukee Courier: [Michels Businesses Lack in Diversity](#)

“Republican Tim Michels currently campaigning for Governor of Wisconsin against Incumbent Democratic Governor Tony Evers has a history of being a business owner but not a history of diversity.

[...]

“Public records Michels was required to file with Urbana, Illinois show that between 2011 and 2022 Michels Corporation’s demographics never surpassed 3% Black, 8.2% Hispanic, 0.5% Asian or Pacific Islander, and 1.5% Native American or Alaska Native employees, and never dipped below 88% White employees.

“The lack of diversity was even more pronounced at the top rungs of the corporate ladder. In 2022, 97.8% of Michels’ managers or officials were white, zero were Black and two were Hispanic, while 96.4% of Michels’ employees listed as professionals were white, with zero listed as Black and one as Hispanic.

“In 2016, 96.2% of Michels’ managers or officials were white, only five were Black and nineteen were Hispanic, while 95.4% of Michels’ employees listed as professionals were white, with only one listed as Black and seven Hispanic. In 2015, of the 313 officials or managers at the company, 96.8% were white and only 0.6% were Black. 1.3% were Hispanic.

“Michels Corp’s lack of diversity was far worse than national averages in the construction industry. In 2016, the last year for which both Michels’ employee and construction industry national average information was available, Michels Corp was 90.3% white compared to the construction industry national average of 62.5% white, 6.1% Hispanic compared to the national average of 28.9% Hispanic, 1.6% Black compared to the national average of 5% Black, and 0.4% Asian compared to the national average of 1.7% Asian.

“There has also been accusations of sexual harassment and racial discrimination at the construction company Michels co-owns.

“Female and minority workers who worked for a Brownsville construction company co-owned by the Republican gubernatorial candidate were allegedly subjected to sexual assault and harassment, racial discrimination and a hostile work environment, according to federal court cases spanning over two decades.

“Most of the wide-ranging allegations in five lawsuits filed between 1998-2020 occurred on job sites in other states, with one in Wisconsin, while Tim Michels and his brothers ran the company.

“Federal court documents reveal three former female employees separately sued Michels Corporation in 1998, and twice in 2012, claiming they faced repeated verbal and at times physical abuse, and some were pressured to have sex with male

coworkers.

“The company was also sued by workers who were Black, most recently in 2020, over allegations of racial hostility including a report of a noose found near a jobsite.

“Michels has previously described his role at Michels Corp as being ‘responsible for everything,’ including for ‘safety,’ across the company and touted his ‘great executive leadership.’