

Rape investigation of FL GOP chairman expands to video voyeurism

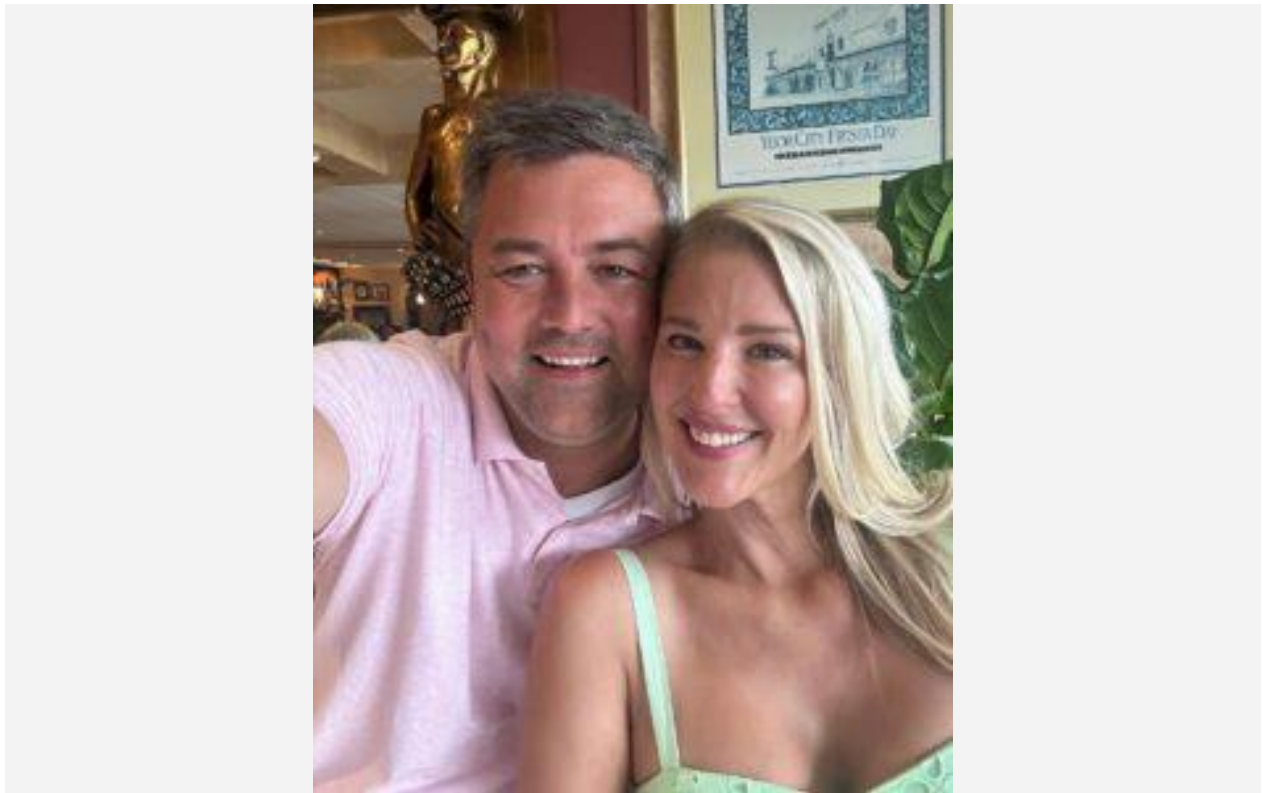
by [Michael Barfield](#) | Jan 2, 2024 | [Featured News](#)



Christian Ziegler claims conduct was consensual.

Sarasota police are investigating whether Florida GOP Chairman Christian Ziegler unlawfully videotaped the sexual encounter at the heart of a rape allegation against him, a third search warrant affidavit obtained by the *Florida Trident* reveals.

Based on the newly released Dec. 8 [police affidavit](#), Circuit Judge Thomas Krug issued a search warrant for Ziegler's Instagram account after finding probable cause the embattled Republican official violated state law prohibiting video voyeurism, a third-degree felony punishable by up to five years in prison.



Christian and Bridget Ziegler in a photo published on Bridget's official Facebook account.

Police also continue to investigate the allegation that Ziegler raped the woman who appears in the video on Oct 2. after a planned threesome fell through between her, Ziegler, and his wife, Bridget Ziegler, a Sarasota County School Board member and cofounder of Moms for Liberty.

The *Florida Trident* obtained the new search warrant from the Clerk of Court through a public records request.

Two [previous search warrants](#) show the woman canceled the tryst when she learned Bridget Ziegler couldn't make it, but alleged Christian Ziegler came to her apartment against her wishes, bent her over a piece of furniture, and raped her.

A “Vanishing” Instagram Message

In a police interview on Nov. 2, Ziegler claimed the encounter was consensual and showed detectives a two-and-a-half minute video of the sex act he'd taken on his iPhone, according to the new affidavit.

Ziegler's attorney, Derek Byrd, told police during the same interview the woman sent an Instagram message to Ziegler shortly after the sexual encounter asking him if he'd shown the video to Bridget Ziegler. Byrd said the message was sent in “vanish mode.”

The woman, however, told police she never sent such an Instagram message

and had no knowledge Ziegler had recorded the encounter. Bridget Ziegler also said she knew nothing about the video, Sarasota police Det. Megan Buck wrote in the affidavit.

“Detectives spoke with both the victim and Ziegler’s wife,” wrote Buck, a veteran detective who serves on the FBI’s Child Exploitation Task Force. “The victim did not give Ziegler consent to take this video of them having sex. Neither ... Ziegler’s wife or the victim knew anything about this video that had been taken of the sexual encounter on 10/02/23, and neither had seen the video of this encounter.”

Buck added she believed “evidence of the crime will be found within the Instagram account belonging to Christian Ziegler.” Sources close to the investigation have told the *Trident* the alleged Instagram message has not been recovered by detectives.

Florida’s video voyeurism statute forbids the recording of another person, without their knowledge, “for his or her own amusement, entertainment, sexual arousal, gratification, or profit, or for the purpose of degrading or abusing” them.

Christian Ziegler has not been charged with any crime to date, and Bridget Ziegler has not been accused of any criminal wrongdoing. Neither have responded to multiple requests for comment.

Zieglers Under Fire

Since the *Florida Trident* first broke the story of the rape investigation on Nov. 30, the case has led to widespread national and international media attention. The Republican power couple – who promoted “family values,” led book-banning crusades, and pushed an anti-LGBTQ agenda in the nation’s public schools – has been heavily criticized for their perceived hypocrisy.



Ziegler working on his wife’s school board campaign.

Despite calls by Gov. Ron DeSantis and other leading state Republicans for him to resign, Christian Ziegler continues to cling to his position as state GOP chair, even after the Republican Party of Florida's executive board found him "unfit" to continue to his role and stripped him of his salary and authority at a Dec. 17 emergency meeting. A special meeting of the statewide executive committee is scheduled for Jan. 8 to remove him entirely.

Sources on the RPOF executive board have told the *Trident* some donors are unwilling to make planned contributions until Ziegler is removed as party chair. Bridget Ziegler has also come under intense pressure to exit the public arena. The Sarasota County School Board voted 4-1 on a measure urging her to resign her position at Dec. 12 board meeting during which numerous members of the public, including current and former students, excoriated Ziegler for her actions on the board and perceived hypocrisy. The lone "no" vote was cast by Ziegler, who has refused to give up her seat.

Bridget Ziegler also sits on the Central Florida Tourism Board which has been at the forefront of Governor Ron DeSantis' culture war with Disney over its opposition to the "Don't Say Gay" law. She was the architect of the law and stood behind DeSantis when he signed the legislation. The governor has not taken action to remove Ziegler from either post.

About the Author: Michael Barfield focuses on the enforcement of open government laws. He serves as FLCGA's lead investigator and director of public records. He regularly assists journalists across the country with collecting information and publishing news reports obtained from public records and other sources. He is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists.