

Latest Blame-Dodging Tactic in Foley Scandal is 'Appalling, Disgusting and Pure McCarthyism'

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force calls upon Democrats, Republicans and straight allies to stand up for gay Americans

October 5, 2006

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force today condemned emerging attempts to shift responsibility for the Foley scandal by blaming gay Republican congressional staffers for supposedly covering up prior reports of predatory behavior by former Rep. Mark Foley. Discussions of a supposed network of closeted gay Republicans working on Capitol Hill have swept the blogs and been raised on MSNBC and CBS. There are allegations, for example, that gay former Foley aide Kirk Fordham, the recently resigned chief of staff for Tom Reynolds (R-NY), worked to play down complaints about Foley's behavior. Fordham has said that more than three years ago he had "more than one conversation with senior staff at the highest level of the House of Representatives asking them to intervene."

Statement from Matt Foreman, Executive Director National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

"The GOP has only one response when it's in trouble — 'blame the gays.' First, they floated the excuse that past complaints about Foley weren't pursued because Republicans didn't want to look like they were 'gay bashing.' Then, they dispatched henchmen like Tony Perkins and Pat Buchanan to offer the blood libel that gay men are prone to pedophilia. Now — in another signal of desperation — it is clear they plan to poison the debate further with allusions to a shadowy network of closeted gay Republicans who closed ranks to protect Foley.

"The parallels to McCarthyism are chilling. Here it is gays, not communists, 'operating at the highest levels of government.'

"There is no doubt that allegations of Foley's misconduct were brought directly to the attention of the Republican leadership of the House. They chose to look the other way. They alone are to blame.

"While many Democrats may be taking real pleasure in watching the GOP twist and turn, it's long past time for them — and other leaders — to denounce these shameful, gay-baiting, responsibility-evading tactics."

What the media are saying:

From an Oct. 5 *New York Times* editorial titled "Real Scandals, and Fake Ones":

"Conservative politicians frequently try to score political points by railing against homosexuality ...

there's reason to worry that the scandal could tempt Republican politicians and their defenders to try to turn it into an anti-gay witch hunt in the Capitol.”

From an Oct. 4 CBS/AP report:

“CBS News has learned that several other top Republican staffers who handled the Foley matter are also gay. Their role in this controversy has caused a firestorm among GOP conservatives, who charge that a group of high-level gay Republican staffers were protecting a gay Republican congressman, reports CBS News correspondent Gloria Borger.”

From the davidcorn.com blog:

“There's a list going around. Those disseminating it call it 'The List.' It's a roster of top-level Republican congressional aides who are gay. On CBS News on Tuesday, correspondent Gloria Borger reported that there's anger among House Republicans at what an unidentified House GOPer called a 'network of gay staffers and gay members who protect each other and did the Speaker a disservice.' The implication is that these gay Republicans somehow helped page-pursuing Mark Foley before his ugly (and possibly illegal) conduct was exposed. The List — drawn up by gay politicians — is a partial accounting of who on Capitol Hill might be in that network.”

From an Oct. 5 posting on The Corner, a nationalreview.com blog:

MCCORNTHYISM [John Podhoretz]

David Corn, 2006: “[The list] includes nine chiefs of staffs, two press secretaries, and two directors of communications—[and] (if it's accurate [sic]) it shows that some of the religious right's favorite representatives and senators have gay staffers helping them advance their political careers and agendas.”

Joseph McCarthy, 1950: “A list of 205 people...who, nevertheless, are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department.”