



Gay community analyzes Mark Foley's resignation, says he's 'in the closet'

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"He was a homophobe who needed to be exposed," said journalist Michael Rogers, whose Web site, <http://www.blogactive.com/>, reported on Florida Rep. Mark Foley for three years.

"I first started to report on Foley in March 2003," said Rogers, who is gay. "The reason why -- he's antigay. He voted for the Defense of Marriage Act and has not renounced that vote. He refused to acknowledge that he supported the repeal of 'don't ask, don't tell.' He would not sign on as a co-sponsor. He should be held accountable for not supporting that or co-sponsoring.

"No community is expected to harbor their own enemies from within. He is an enemy of our community, yet he wants to step into our community and put us at risk. He puts every one of us in a bad light."

In 1996, The Advocate, a gay newsmagazine, outed Foley. During his 2003 run for U.S. Senate, several Florida newspapers reported the old Advocate story. Foley has never publicly said that he is gay. On May 23, 2003, he called a news conference and said that the innuendo about his life was "revolting and unforgivable" and that he would not discuss his sexual orientation. "Elected officials, even those who run for the United States Senate, must have some level of privacy," Foley said during a half-hour conference call with newspaper reporters from across Florida. "My mother and father raised me and the rest of my family to believe that there are certain things we shouldn't discuss in public. Some of you may believe that it's old-fashioned, but I believe those are good ideals to live by."

Rogers said Foley's problems come from being in the closet.

"I do believe that he had unhealthy sexual advances to these guys because he was living his life as a closeted gay man," Rogers said. "Healthy gay men who are mature and dealing with their sexuality in a mature way don't hit on kids who are 16 years old. What's his signature issue? You don't know whether to laugh or cry."

Finance writer Andrew Tobias of Miami, who is gay and treasurer of the Democratic National Committee said:

"As somebody who has met Mark Foley personally and has mutual friends, I am sad for Mark and I hope he doesn't go to jail. The last time I saw Mark, he was 19 years into a relationship. That was sad that it had to be hidden.

"I hope the Republican Party continues to evolve so it's not so difficult to be an openly gay Republican.

"Will this play into the fears that all gay people are pedophiles? I hope not. There are heterosexual situations as well. Everybody decries this kind of situation. Even Mark Foley did, but he couldn't control it."

Other gay activists were more circumspect.

"It's a tragedy for him and his family. I don't want to get into the pain of the closet. It's irrelevant if he's gay or not," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

Luis Vizcaino, communications and marketing director for Human Rights Campaign, declined to discuss Foley's resignation. "We're not going to comment on it," he said.

In 2005, HRC gave Foley an 88 out of 100 score on gay issues, making him one of the highest-ranked Republicans in Congress.