



Mindless in Minneapolis-And Elsewhere

By: PAUL SCHINDLER
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Yet again we face a homosexual scandal involving a gay-baiting right-wing Republican which ought to allow us to savor the hypocrisy but instead threatens the conversation we all hope to have with America.

Once among their proudest spear throwers, Larry Craig is now being abandoned by the right at breakneck speed. The Republican Senate conference, which took no position on the July revelation tying ultra-conservative Louisiana Senator David Vitter to the Washington madam scandal, by Tuesday had called for a Senate Ethics investigation of Craig.

Mitt Romney, on whose presidential campaign Craig served, termed the Idaho senator's conduct "disgusting," and mindful of the political need to pin something disgusting on the Democrats compared it to Bill Clinton's Oval Office blowjob. John McCain, in contrast, claimed he wouldn't take "a moral stand" and be "holier than thou" (a dig at the Mormon?), but feels that "when you plead guilty to a crime, then you shouldn't serve." He called on Craig to resign.

Minnesota's Norm Coleman, who has a hometown airport to defend after all, endorsed a Romney-McCain ticket, calling Craig "disgusting" and urging him to resign.

Bow-tied conservative commentator Tucker Carlson, yucking it up with Florida congressman-turned talk show host Joe Scarborough and Dan Abrams on MSNBC, recounted a high school incident in which he was "bothered" in a men's room, left, and returned with someone with whom he "grabbed the guy by the - you know, and grabbed him, and - and- hit him against the stall with his head, actually!" The police soon arrived to arrest Carlson's botherer.

Probably wise of Carlson not to have attacked every American who's wondered if Tucker's gay.

Meanwhile, an Atlanta airport cop bragged to CNN that his team arrested 45 men in bathrooms there this year and sometimes goes online to arrange hook-ups with others. A clueless, but suitably alarmist CNN correspondent asked if the behavior ever involves pedophilia. That red meat seemed too much even for the proud tearoom morals enforcer.

In Sacramento, on the local CBS affiliate, the morning news anchor and the weatherman attempted to act out the scene in the Minneapolis airport bathroom on live television. Again, everyone shared a round of laughs.

All of this hooey comes amidst an ongoing jihad waged by Fort Lauderdale Mayor Jim Naugle against the scourge of lewdness by "homosexual" men-he refuses to call us "gay" because we are, he said, for the most part "unhappy." Naugle's rhetoric combined with the disgust-cum-titters occasioned by the Craig matter may have some Americans wondering how bad this public sex problem has become. By the way, the Fort Lauderdale police report a grand total of four lewdness arrests in the past two-and-a-half years.

Largely absent from the national debate has been the question of why law enforcement resources at security-challenged locations such as the Minneapolis and Atlanta airports are being tied up chasing down behavior such as Craig's. The cop in Minneapolis from his own description was

sitting in that stall for a good while. The Atlanta officer volunteered the information about recruiting pigeons online.

And anyone who has done any serious reporting on lewdness arrests, as this newspaper has, knows that entrapment is at least 50 percent of that game. Did Larry Craig receive some subtle invitation as he in turn was signaling his own interest peering through that stall door's crack - or is he just one unlucky dumb bastard?

Last year, when Congressman Mark Foley's Internet naughty chat scandal broke, two Democratic challengers to GOP incumbents targeted their opponents as protectors of child predators. They both lost. Hopefully their behavior, widely seen as over-the-top, taught the Democrats something.

Those of us in the gay community - let's be smart too. Enjoy a laugh or two, but let's not get into the demonizing game too enthusiastically.

Matt Foreman of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force struck just the right balance: "What's up with elected officials like Senator Craig? They stand for so-called 'family values' and fight basic protections for gay people while furtively seeking other men for sex. Infuriating pathetic hypocrites.

"What more can you say?"

But then he added, "And by the way, why are Minneapolis tax dollars being used to have plainclothes police officers lurking idly in airport restroom stalls?"