

GOPs and Gays and Good Ol' Politics

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Abstract

"The gays and lesbians are after me! The gays and lesbians are after me!!!" -- Texas State Rep. Robert Talton (R) while running down the halls of the Texas Capitol Building being chased by a transsexual activist. All apologies, but I had to start this article with a bit about Robert Talton of Pasadena, Texas [...]

Article

"The gays and lesbians are after me! The gays and lesbians are after me!!!" -- Texas State Rep. Robert Talton (R) while running down the halls of the Texas Capitol Building being chased by a transsexual activist. All apologies, but I had to start this article with a bit about Robert Talton of Pasadena, Texas (or as we like to refer to our suburb here in Houston, Pasa-g*ddamned-dena). It was instructed to we trans activists not to bother with Talton, he was bad news - not the worst, but bad news. Well, myself and another close friend with me that day, Dani MacCleney, were always up for the challenges - giant killers we considered ourselves. During that first visit any of us had made to Talton's office we discovered something. He was very much into the evangelical play book, fashioned his entire agenda after a tight circle of cherry-picked biblical text. However, he had some pretty serious skeletons in his closet. We both walked out with one word in mind: xenophobia. In time, I and others learned to fight fire with fire, using biblical text to counter his own. That's when the rules changed, he couldn't see us any more, he needed DPS officers (state police here in Texas) to escort him to and from his appointments and to act as sentry outside his office to keep us out. He even singled out a female minister (sitting next to her husband), pointed and declared "I don't like you and I don't like your kind!" The minister was aghast, replying "What?! Presbyterians?!" Apparently Talton presumed the minister, whose hair was short, was a lesbian even though she was sitting next to her legally-married husband. Here in Texas, Robert Talton personifies the word phobia - whether homophobia or transphobia (or other unpublicized lesser-known phobias) he's become Public Enemy #1 of anything GLBT. Indeed he revels in his reputation as a pig would wallow in mud. Recently we had the latest in a recent spate of Republican outings and subsequent oustings from their political office and party participation itself. Former Sen. Larry Craig (R-ID) has been a staunch anti-GLBT vote to the red-meat conservatives dominating the GOP. He comes from the mountain state red zone, Idaho, where anti-homosexuality rants play to standing ovations. Yes, he was a man in his element. At least he was, so long as he kept his personal and private feelings about sexuality private. Then came the infamous "sting" in June at the Minneapolis airport men's restroom. Yes, it seems Sen. Craig got caught up in a sex-sting dragnet in airport bathrooms there. Kind of an odd place to pick up a quickie, but some will go to extraordinary lengths I suppose - no pun intended, of course. Apparently this is a recent fad, and one that even the

conservative senator appeared to know about. In typical hand-in-the-cookie-jar guilt, the senator tried his mightiest to wiggle out of being nabbed. First he plopped down his business card and demanded “how do you like that?” The arresting officer was unimpressed. After a bout of entrapment claims, Craig finally acquiesced and pleaded guilty to the charge. Then came the contrition (or as best as the Republican senator could muster): “I’m not gay and never have been gay.” Note how he cleverly avoided anything to do with bisexuality (he is married), and how we never here him talk of never having had a homosexual experience. Still ... clever wording, very Republican. The one major misstep by Sen. Larry ... he admitted guilt to the charge. Cardinal sin in RNC-land. There was a literal RNC stampede away from ol’ Sen. Larry after the guilt plea. Who cares about honesty? When there’s consistent denial, it’s plausible deniability regardless of how red-handed you’re caught - at least in Republican-land. Unless it’s adultery by a male politician with a woman (a-la Sen. David Vitter (R-LA), admitting guilt is a kiss of death. Witness the contrast between Randy “Duke” Cunningham (caught and admitted guilt) and Tom DeLay (caught and denied vehemently). However, it was more than guilt that got him a speedy one-way ticket out of GOPperville. Compounding it was being caught as being gay. Though it may seem so in recent years, GOP does not stand for “Gay Old Party” - something the conservatives will be quick to point out. Again, when you have an “R” next to your name, you’re never truly gay until your caught by your own admission, red-handed or no. Why be like Mark Foley or Ed Schrock when you could be a David Dreier or even aspire to the highest office in the land like President George W. Bush? Even though the hypocrisy of the consistently anti-gay legislator was blatant, hypocrisy by his own party is much more bluntly evident. Sen. Larry is a fine man up to the minute he admits his guilt. And in their defense, Republicans point out Gerry Studds and Barney Frank (both D-MA). How weak is that? Democrats aren’t the judgmental ideologues. That’s Republicans. Democrats pardon. Republicans never forget, nor let it go. And while Jesus forgives, and Democrats generally follow suit, Republicans tend to like Paul’s teachings better, or the Old Testament punitive styles better still (Jesus being a bit too liberal for their tastes.) Later Sen. Larry hinted at wanting a do over. Or maybe not. He decided the error of his ways was admitting guilt, and that holding out for wearing the opposition down (RNC-style) is a better strategy. But then he even rescinded that by saying it’s his “intent” to step down September 30 as planned. Notice the equivocal wording. (Can you say “wiggle room”?) Who knows what’s Sen. Larry’s plans are - we’re not sure he knows just yet. Recently he’s flipping and flopping like a freshly beached fish on a hook. One thing you can say, you gotta admire the chutzpah of Republicans and their morals. Whether it’s Rush Limbaugh railing about all druggies needing life in prison until he’s popped gaming scrips to feed his addiction to hillbilly heroin (aka: oxycontin), or President Bush taking hard line on lawbreakers until it happens to a well-connected aide such as Scooter Libby. Sen. Larry was always a reliable vote against anything GLBT, a good RNC company man. The American Conservative Union rated Craig’s 2005 voting record at 96 out of 100 points! After his guilty plea, he bleats at the crowd during his press conference back in Idaho, “I am not gay. I have never been gay” But of course, rumors had been going around even in his own party circles of his rep. A report from the Idaho Statesman noted:

[A] man, who identified himself as gay, told a reporter that Craig cruised him at the R.E.I. store in Boise in November 1994, following him around the store for half an hour.
(<http://www.idahostatesman.com/eyepiece/story/143801.html>)

And later

The last reported incident to the Idaho Statesman about Senator Craig's conduct came from a professional 40-year-old man with close ties to Republican officials. According to the man's story about the encounter with Senator Craig, the man "reported having oral sex with Craig at Washington's [DC] Union Station, probably in 2004." A reporter for the Idaho Statesman interviewed Craig on May 14, 2007 [a few weeks before the airport sting] regarding the allegations about his conduct, and in response to the reporter's questions, Craig said "I'm not gay, and I don't cruise, and I don't hit on men. [...] I don't go around anywhere hitting on men, and by God, if I did, I wouldn't do it in Boise, Idaho! Jiminy!" (<http://www.idahostatesman.com/eyepiece/story/143801.html>)

Yeah GOPpers can't get away from gays fast enough (especially if its one of their own). One word comes to mind when someone who they typically consider a good red-meat Republican ends up being publicly known as gay: Hypocrisy. It's too jarring a 180 degree turn to not notice. Leave it to GOPs to be the only ones brazen enough to be so blatant and somehow get away with it in plain sight. Gay panic aside, GOP-folk may miss some of that Log Cabin money and support in a really tight election season. One wonders if the RNC and GOP politicians will try to revisit their "almost victory" 50-49 senate vote of 1996 where they calculated their votes on the Employment Non Discrimination Act (ENDA) after the DOMA blowout. Maybe if they give another "almost victory" they'll be able to fool enough well-to-do, tax-break-hungry gays and lesbians to pull off a victory again. Although looking at the GOPpers' well-demonstrated history over the past decade, it's hard to see how anyone gay or lesbian could find anything redemptive with an R next to its name. Not unless they're really hardcore about social climbing, power mongering and addicted to those tax breaks on their economic recovery windfalls.

Regardless of whether gay or lesbian America ever decides to give them another chance, GOPs and RNC folks can always fall back on their newest victory cry for their red meat base: "I am not gay! I have never been gay! Oh! And Iraq was a justified war!" Don't ask. Don't tell. Nobody wants to know.

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