

## **Gay Youth Group Calls For 'Full Disclosure' Of Foley Affair**

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by 365Gay.com Newscenter Staff

(Washington) A national organization the fights for the rights of LGBT youth is calling for a full investigation of former Congressman Mark Foley's email and text messages to Capitol Hill pages.

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition said that it is "shocked" by the "lurid email exchanges" and if Foley is guilty of a crime "he should be prosecuted under the very laws he helped to enact."

'Gay or straight, Congressman Mark Foleys behavior is like that of a predator who should be arrested and prosecuted for his criminal behavior; and those around him who knew, and did not act to stop him, are just as guilty" said NYACs Executive Director, Craig Bowman.

"We are talking about a sixteen-year-old who was exploited by a person in power - someone he should have been able to trust," said Bowman in a statement.

The Florida Republican resigned his seat on Friday after it was disclosed he had sent "inappropriate" emails to a former Congressional Page. Monday allegations began surfacing that Foley also sent messages to other former pages and the Republican leadership in the House had known about the situation for some time.

"The possibility that the leadership of the House of Representatives had knowledge of the congressman's behavior, but did not act to stop what can only be characterized as child sexual abuse, is outrageous," said Bowman. "Instead, he was allowed to remain as the powerful co-chairman of the House Caucus on Missing and Exploited Children."

"The American public needs to know what the House leadership knew, and when they knew it."

In new revelations Tuesday, ABC news reported that Foley interrupted a vote on the floor of the House in 2003 to engage in Internet sex with a high school student who had served as a congressional page. The network said that it had in its possession 52 pieces of correspondence between Foley and two different boys under the age of 18. Copies of the emails were posted on the ABC Web site.

While the GOP continued to try to contain the damage on Tuesday, a leading conservative newspaper called for House Leader Dennis Hastert to step down. In an editorial the Washington Times said Hastert was either "grossly negligent" or he "deliberately looked the other way."

"Mr. Hastert has forfeited the confidence of the public and his party, and he cannot preside over the necessary coming investigation, an investigation that must examine his own inept performance," The Times said.

A spokesperson for Hastert said he had no intention of resigning. Hastert insists top GOP aides acted appropriately.

Meanwhile, David Roth, Foley's attorney, held a news conference in West Palm Beach, Florida to say that Foley was "absolutely, positively not a pedophile" and had never had inappropriate sexual contact with a minor.

Bowman said that the issue is not one of sexuality. "This is an issue about protecting children from those who seek to do them harm. It should be a priority for our country. Somehow, it seems to have gotten lost," he said.

"I've been working on issues facing our nation's young people for 15 years and I've never been more disheartened. I've seen first-hand plenty of Congressional battles when it comes to youth-focused funding or priorities, but to learn that some in leadership had the chance to stop active abuse against a child and did nothing . . . that's unacceptable. They should be embarrassed, ashamed and held responsible, added Bowman.

**Matt Foreman, the executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force agrees that the issue is not sexuality.**

**"Given the fact that the current Republican leadership in the House has never hesitated to attack gay people, it's even more absurd for people like Newt Gingrich to say the reason they didn't take prompt action was because they didn't want to be accused of 'gay bashing.' Cut me a break," said Foreman.**

**"What's clear is that the House leadership elevated holding onto a seat above the interests of young people in the party system. And they want to talk about 'moral values'? Please."**