



## Op-Ed: Sen. Larry Craig must go; GOP must clean house

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Obviously Larry Craig should resign his Idaho Senate seat. It's the only way he can begin the process of reclaiming his honor.

And his fellow Republicans should push Craig out - not just out of his committee leadership assignments, but out of the Senate altogether - if this confessed criminal won't go. In the wake of former Florida Rep. Mark Foley's alleged pedophilia - and confirmed inappropriate contact with boys - and in the wake of an additional string of sexual abuses, the GOP needs to clean its own house.

Otherwise, the jibing words of critics will ring true to many; as sex-blogger Susie Bright put it, "From now on, as far as I'm concerned, every single Republican legislator is a Reeking Freak Closet Case until proven innocent."

But equally obviously, the gay left and libertarians should not over-interpret the results of what happened here. The country, in its basic conservative wisdom, still wants to see order maintained - on the streets, on the border and in men's rooms.

**A case in point is an Aug. 27 press release from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in which executive director Matt Foreman - not feeling nearly as forgiving as he was toward disgraced Democratic ex-New Jersey Gov. Jim McGreevey - labeled Craig "infuriating" and "pathetic." Foreman went further in his written statement, referring to conservative "so-called 'family values.'" Did you notice the sneering quotes around "family values"?**

**But then Foreman went too far - and reminded many Americans why conservatism is still needed. "And by the way," Foreman concluded, "why are Minneapolis tax dollars being used to have plainclothes police officers lurking idly in airport rest room stalls?" So that's the NGLTF's alternative to family values: Do-your-own-thing libertinism brought to public places.**

Well, the answer is that sex-cruising can be a real problem. Ordinary Americans, especially those with small children, might ask themselves: Do we want the likes of Larry Craig hanging around public rest rooms, peeping into bathroom stalls?

Craig is hardly unique: Yesterday, The New York Times, not exactly a bastion of homophobia, noted that there are Web sites that exist precisely for the purpose of telling gay men where to meet for quick sex, which also detail where police are taking active counter-measures. Have cops been known to entrap? Yes. But it's even more true that public places hold a weird attraction to a certain portion of the populace - straight as well as gay - and society has a legitimate interest in stifling such activity.

It's also worth pointing out that Hennepin County, where the Minneapolis airport is located and where Craig was arrested by an undercover officer, is not Saudi Arabia. The state of Minnesota is

mostly liberal; in the 2004 presidential election, for example, John Kerry won 59 percent of the vote there, and Democrats have won the Gopher State in 11 of the last 12 presidential elections.

Indeed, few Democrats seemed interested in joining Foreman - as well as Craig, of course - in denouncing the Twin Cities' cops for overzealous law enforcement. Longtime New York Democratic activist Mark Green, now a host on the Air America radio network, was eager to blast Republicans on MSNBC's "Hardball" on Tuesday. But he added, "Of course, you're going to have to enforce the rules on public lewdness."

Thus, the dilemma: The vast majority of citizens - including many homosexuals, closeted or not - believe in exactly the sort of law enforcement that snared Craig. Indeed, most people, straight and otherwise, believe instinctively in a natural ethical order of self-discipline and propriety. And so comes the tragic dimension: Plenty of people - all of us, in fact, in our different ways - fall short of our own ideals.

But the maintenance of an overall moral order, vital to the continuation of society, requires that we all strive to live up to the same basic standards of civility and decency. And so just as law-breakers must be caught, so hypocrites must be dealt with.

It's time for you to go, Sen. Craig.