



Lawmakers call for Craig to resign

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By [Kathy Kiely](#), USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Several Republican lawmakers called on Sen. Larry Craig to quit Wednesday, and the party's Senate leaders stripped him of his committee posts, a day after the Idaho Republican recanted his guilty plea on charges stemming from his arrest in a public restroom.

Craig, 62, was arrested June 11 by police investigating sexual activity in a Minneapolis airport men's room. He said he pleaded guilty to a disorderly conduct charge "to make it go away" and declared, "I am not gay."

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Signs of Craig's waning support from his own party:

- Arizona Sen. John McCain, Minnesota Sen. Norm Coleman, Michigan Rep. Pete Hoekstra and others said Craig should resign.

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- In a joint statement, top Senate GOP leaders said they were stripping Craig of his committee assignments while the matter is being investigated by the Senate Ethics Committee.

- A spokesman for President Bush described the administration as "disappointed" by the Craig controversy. "We hope it will be resolved quickly," White House deputy press secretary Tony Fratto said.

In Boise, Craig spokesman Sidney Smith told the Associated Press he has heard no discussion of a possible resignation. On Tuesday, Craig told reporters it would be weeks before he announces whether he will seek a fourth Senate term next year.

Some Republicans don't think he should wait that long.

"Senator Craig pled guilty to a crime involving conduct unbecoming a senator. He should resign," said Coleman, one of 21 Republicans whose Senate seat the party will defend next year.

McCain, a GOP presidential candidate, echoed those sentiments in an interview on CNN. "My opinion is that when you plead guilty to a crime, you shouldn't serve," he said.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said Craig agreed to give up his position on several key committees at the GOP leadership team's request. "This is not a decision we take lightly, but we believe this is in the best interest of the Senate until this situation is resolved by the Ethics Committee," McConnell said in a statement co-signed by his four top deputies.

The comments from Craig's colleagues, and the decisive action by GOP Senate leaders, who referred his case to the ethics panel minutes before Craig explained his guilty plea Tuesday, underscored concern about political fallout. Last year, Republicans lost control of the House after an ethics committee investigation found that GOP leaders did not respond quickly enough to reports that then-congressman Mark Foley, R-Fla., was making advances to former congressional pages.

The swift sanctioning of Craig prompted one gay rights group to question why the Idaho senator was treated so harshly while Sen. David Vitter, a Louisiana Republican who earlier this year admitted to patronizing a call-girl service, was not. **"What explains the starkly different responses? I'd say rank and homophobic hypocrisy," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.**

A gay Republican leader, however, joined the criticism of Craig, arguing that the senator had set back the cause of gay rights. "Every time I hear about gay people, it's in the context of gay sex in a deviant way," said Patrick Sammon, president of the Log Cabin Republicans. "It's unfortunate, the effect it has on people's perceptions and stereotypes."