

Clinton's 'pansy' situation

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by Lisa Keen, Keen News Service*

"Pansy" entered the presidential campaign lexicon this week, via Hillary Clinton supporter Mike Easley. Easley—the governor of North Carolina, whose primary looms at May 6—was announcing his endorsement April 29 when he sought to make the point that Clinton has distinguished herself as a tenacious candidate. So tenacious is Clinton, said Easley, that she "makes Rocky Balboa look like a pansy." The governor's press office did not return a reporter's call seeking clarification on whether Easley was contrasting the über-macho movie boxer to a little flower or a weak or effeminate man. But the audience laughed and Clinton held onto a broad but wincing smile. Various LGBT bloggers weighed in, saying Clinton should reprimand Easley for the remark or ignore it.

Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese said his group expressed its disappointment in the governor's choice of words and encouraged Easley to make amends with people who may have taken offense. Solmonese said he hopes Clinton will also encourage Easley to do so.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Communications Director Roberta Sklar said the Task Force "does not plan to comment on every ill-chosen word of every politician or private citizen to speak out in the presidential campaign." "Obviously, the use of 'pansy' by Easley is offensive," said Sklar, "however, we think the candidates should be judged on their own statements, not on the continuous flow of comments from others. There are so many really important issues for the candidates to address—that is where everyone's attention should be."