

Fighting words from Easley, Wright as primary race continues

By Lisa Keen - Keen News Service
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North Carolina governor says Clinton is no pansy; Obama's former pastor makes headlines again with AIDS conspiracy talk

FIGHTING WORDS: "Pansy" entered the presidential campaign lexicon this week, via Hillary Clinton supporter Mike Easley.

Easley, the governor of North Carolina, whose primary will be held Tuesday, May 6, was announcing his endorsement on Clinton on Tuesday, 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."

FIGHTING WORDS II: Speaking of ill-chosen words, Barack Obama's former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, drew considerable attention to himself and his former congregant this week. In addition to repeating ideas like HIV was a government-sponsored epidemic induced against African-Americans, Wright suggested that Obama's efforts to distance himself from Wright's remarks were mere political expediency.

"He had to distance himself," said Wright, "because he's a politician"

In remarks before a conference of black religious leaders, according to the Washington Post, Wright "praised" Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

The Post noted that, in North Carolina Tuesday, April 29, Obama said, "When [Wright] states and then amplifies such ridiculous propositions as the U.S. government somehow being involved in AIDS, when he suggests Minister Farrakhan somehow represents one of the greatest voices of the 20th and 21st Centuries, when he equates the United States' wartime efforts with terrorism — there are no excuses. They offend me. They rightly offend all Americans."

OBAMA BOOSTERS: The Washington Blade reported April 18 that a gay male couple in California has been distinguishing themselves as big fundraisers for Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

The Blade says Federal Elections Commission records indicate that the couple, Jeremy Bernard and Rufus Gifford, "has helped steer nearly \$27 million in donations from California residents to Obama"

In January, an article in LA Weekly credited Bernard with feeding the candidate with the "fine points of gay and lesbian federal legislation."