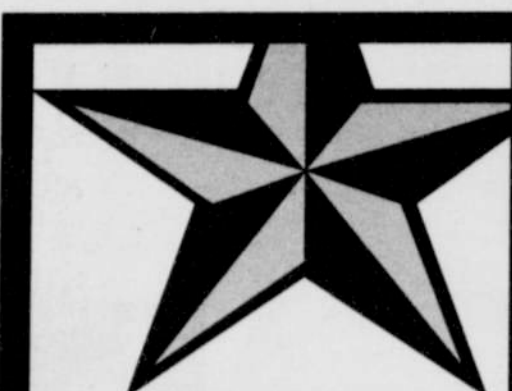




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national

FLORIDA

Florida Congressman Resigns Amid Sex Scandal

U.S. Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla., strongly denies having ever had sexual conduct with any minor. He resigned in shame Sept. 29 after sexually suggestive online exchanges with a male teenager became public.

In a statement, Foley said, "I am deeply sorry, and I apologize for letting down my family and the people of Florida I have had the privilege to represent."

Foley's attorney revealed Oct. 3 that the congressman was molested by a clergyman as a teen. He was raised Roman Catholic.

The most incriminating of instant messages exchanged between Foley and a former congressional page, who was reportedly 17 at the time, are what have been called "illicit masturbatory fantasies." The exchanges, from Foley's personal e-mail account, span from 2003 to 2004.

Foley reportedly used the online moniker "FFF," which stood for "Foley the fag from Florida."

Foley is described as openly closeted, though he has been outed by several gay activists through the years. His sexual orientation first arose as an issue during his 2003 bid for the U.S. Senate. He called the rumors "revolting and unforgivable" and later withdrew from the campaign, citing personal reasons.

Foley has racked up the voting record of a moderate conservative since he was elected to Congress in 1994. The Family Research Council rated him at 69 percent, the lowest among Florida Republicans. He played a leadership role on AIDS issues, supported the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, opposed anti-gay provisions of faith-based legislation and voted against the Federal Marriage Amendment. He also helped write legislation strengthening prosecution of pedophiles and child pornographers. He expressed conservative values over putting God and the Bible back in school and the Ten Commandments in federal courthouses.

NATIONAL

HIV Testing Plan Worries ACLU

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's new HIV testing recommendations might harm the health of those newly diagnosed with HIV and compromise the civil rights of anyone seeking medical treatment, according to a Sept. 21 statement released by the American Civil Liberties Union.

"The CDC should be commended for trying to increase the number of people tested for HIV, but eliminating the only safeguards that guarantee that testing is voluntary and informed does little to ensure that people will receive the care they need," said Rose Saxe, a staff attorney with the ACLU AIDS Project.

Under the previous guidelines, the CDC recommended that those being tested for HIV give written consent to be tested and receive both pre- and post-test counseling. The new recommendations eliminate both written consent and counseling.

Doing away with written consent requirements could easily lead to people being tested for HIV without their knowledge, particularly in urgent care settings where health care providers might not have the time to have a meaningful discussion with a patient about the consequences of HIV testing and what it means to have HIV.

"Receiving an HIV diagnosis is a significant life-changing event," added Saxe. "Without pre-



Former Florida U.S. Rep. Mark Foley resigned in shame over a gay teen sex scandal.

and post-test counseling requirements, we risk losing a critical opportunity to educate people about HIV and how to prevent the spread of it."

According to the ACLU, the new regulations also raise serious privacy concerns. "HIV discrimination is still rampant in this country. People continue to lose their jobs and housing because they have HIV. If the government is going to collect the names of people with HIV, people deserve to know that this information is going to be used," added Saxe.

Support Grows for "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" Repeal

Congressional support for repealing the federal "don't ask, don't tell" ban on gay, lesbian and bisexual service members continues to grow.

U.S. Reps. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Bill Pascrell, D-N.J., announced their support Sept. 15 for the Military Readiness Enhancement Act, a bill to repeal the law and allow gays to serve openly in the armed forces. A bipartisan coalition of 121 members of Congress now supports the bill, introduced in March 2005 by U.S. Rep. Marty Meehan, D-Mass, and 56 other members of Congress.

"Congress is increasingly aware of the detrimental impact the military's ban has on both our national security and our civil liberties," said former Army Capt. Sharon Alexander, deputy director of policy for Servicemembers Legal Defense Network. "Congressman Conyers and Congressman Pascrell understand that our military is stronger when we place qualification ahead of discrimination. There is nothing more patriotic than equal opportunity, and that is what we are fighting for on behalf of our lesbian, gay and bisexual service members. These brave men and women fight to protect our freedom, and their freedom should be protected, too."

Since 1993, more than 11,000 military personnel have been dismissed under "don't ask, don't tell," including more than 800 with skills deemed "mission-critical" by the Department of Defense. At the same time, recent news reports have indicated military leaders are issuing waivers to attract new recruits to the forces, including waivers for recruits with criminal backgrounds and those who do not meet education, physical fitness and other standards.

"Would you rather have a felon than a gay soldier?" Capt. Scott Stanford, a National Guard commander of a headquarters company who returned from Iraq in June, recently said in *The New York Times*. "I wouldn't."

Conyers and Pascrell both received a perfect