

# RNC Votes to Condemn White Supremacists Over Groans of Some

Some committee members were troubled by Trump's response to violence in Charlottesville

By Thomas Beaumont  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—The Republican National Committee walked the tightrope Friday in carefully but resolutely denouncing white supremacist groups without criticizing President Donald Trump, who waffled in his own statements in the wake of the deadly clash in Virginia this month.

Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, the RNC approved a raft of resolutions, including one asserting “Nazis, the KKK, white supremacists and others are repulsive, evil and have no fruitful place in the United States.”

And while the vote was unanimous, some mem-



Amy Hedtke of Waxahachie, Texas, takes notes as she listens during a session of the the standing committee on rules at the Republican National Committee summer meeting, Thursday, Aug. 24, 2017, in Nashville, Tenn.

bers had grumbled the resolution was unnecessary and reflected unnecessary defensiveness.

“It’s amazing that we have been lured into this argument that we’re not racists. It’s absurd,”

said Colorado Republican Chairman Jeff Hays. “Why would we feel compelled to do that?”

The sentiment reflects a difference between RNC leaders concerned about the party’s image in light of President Donald Trump’s latest rhetorical thicket and newer, more ardently pro-Trump state Republican leaders who say such a statement appears defensive.

But this was a priority for Chairwoman Ronna Romney McDaniel, as well as for committee members who were openly bothered by Trump’s initial resistance to singling out the racist groups after the Charlottesville violence.

Hearing about the grumbling, McDaniel made the rounds Friday morning to reinforce with members that the measure was a priority.

“Every day, I wake up proud that we’re the party of Lincoln,” McDaniel told the committee Friday. “Condemning violence is not a Republican or Democratic issue. It is an American issue.”

Despite the resolution, there doesn’t appear to be a softening of support for the president within

the party’s national organization.

Rather, what was to be a sleepy, pro-forma late summer gathering seemed to spark renewed backing for the president despite a series of recent setbacks: the GOP’s stunning failure to repeal and replace “Obamacare”; the furious backlash over his comments about the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia; and the departure of crowd favorite Reince Priebus, the former RNC chairman, as Trump’s chief of staff.

“The president was not wrong to point out what the media has failed to point out,” that counter-protesters also “came for a battle” in Charlottesville, said Pennsylvania Republican Chairman Val DiGiorgio.

DiGiorgio stood by the “many sides” comment Trump made immediately after the clash in Virginia, in which a car was driven into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing a woman. The president was criticized harshly by both Republicans and Democrats because he didn’t immediately denounce the white nationalist groups.

There was palpable

contempt in the conference room for counter-protesters who were ready to fight. RNC member Morton Blackwell, who affirmed his support for the resolution, said “Every person who came to Charlottesville intending violence was evil.”

Bill Palatucci, a RNC committeeman from New Jersey who sponsored the resolution, said it was important for the committee to formally denounce white supremacists. Palatucci said, “I think he got it wrong a week ago Tuesday, in regards to Charlottesville,” when Trump said during a free-wheeling, defiant news conference that there were “very fine people on both sides” at the demonstration.

But even Palatucci, who was a devout supporter of New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie’s 2016 presidential campaign, said, “I support the president’s agenda.” He cited deregulation measures Trump has signed and the president’s plan, outlined Monday, to send additional U.S. troops to Afghanistan to revive the effort to root out terrorist cells.

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## 48-Hour Rule Gone for Good, Citizen Oversight Board Reforms

The Portland City Council voted unanimously last Thursday to require police officers to speak to someone at internal affairs within two days after a lethal use-of-force incident.

After an initial vote two weeks ago, police reform advocates noted potential loopholes – including language permitting the city to waive the rule and delay testimony – that were sewn shut by the most recent vote.

Last week’s proposal also includes language directing the city attorney’s

“The vote more definitively abolishes the controversial, unique-to-Portland 48-hour rule

office to pursue a court ruling definitively saying whether the policy is legal.

While still subject to court approval, the vote more definitively abolishes the controversial, unique-to-Portland 48-hour rule giving Portland Police Bureau officers a two-day window to wait before issuing a statement after shooting or otherwise using lethal force on a citizen.

The most recent version of the Portland Police Association’s contract

with the city – approved last fall – did away with that rule. But earlier this year the bureau walked back the change under legal advice from Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill. Underhill’s advice cites Oregon v. Soriano, a 1984 state supreme court ruling that requires immunity from prosecution from those forced by employers to testify.

Criminal prosecution of police for on-the-job uses of force is rare in Portland and nationwide. In 2013 PPB officer Dane Reister was the first officer in Portland’s history to face criminal indictment relating to use-of-force charges, after a 2011 incident that critically wounded a man with a beanbag shotgun. Reister was fired by the bureau in 2013 and ended his life in 2015.

The council also approved a plan to create a new citizen oversight board that would replace the now-disbanded Citizens Oversight and Accountability Board created by the city’s settlement with the Department of Justice. According to the city’s plan, the Portland Committee on Community-Engaged Policing will have explicit power to independently assess the settlement agreement, review and make recommendations on police directives and make recommendations on PPB’s community engagement efforts.

—Christen McCurdy

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