

Kirk apologizes for mocking rival's family military history

By Sara Burnett
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — U.S. senator Mark Kirk (R - Illinois) apologized for mocking his Democratic rival's immigrant background and her claim that her family's military service dates back to the Revolution — comments that drew wide criticism and threatened an already difficult re-election campaign.

"Sincere apologies to an American hero, Tammy Duckworth, and gratitude for her family's service," Kirk wrote in a Twitter post.

During a debate in October, U.S. representative Tammy Duckworth said her family has "served this nation in uniform going back to the Revolution."

Kirk responded that he had forgotten that the congresswoman's "parents came all the way from Thailand to serve George Washington."

Duckworth, an Iraq War veteran who lost both legs when the Black Hawk she was piloting was shot down in 2004, was born in Bangkok. Her mother, who is of Chinese descent, was born in Thailand. Duckworth has said her father first went to Southeast Asia while serving with the Marines in Vietnam.

Kirk's remark was greeted mostly by silence in the auditorium of the University of Illinois in Springfield. Elsewhere, there were quick calls for him to apologize. The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee immediately called the comment "offensive, wrong, and racist."

Duckworth, the first Asian-American congresswoman from Illinois, later tweeted a photo of herself with her parents, including her father in uniform displaying his medals. Her tweet says: "My mom is an immigrant and my dad and his



family have served this nation in uniform since the Revolution."

Kirk left the debate without speaking to reporters. Campaign manager Kevin Artl said the senator has called Duckworth "a war hero in his commercials and he commends her family's service."

Kirk's campaign said the senator tried to contact Duckworth by phone to apologize before posting his apology on Twitter. Duckworth's campaign confirmed he had reached out, but it was unclear whether the candidates spoke.

Kirk's comments drew heavy scorn across social media. Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton posted on Twitter that she is thankful for Duckworth's and her family's service, adding: "It's really not that hard to grasp, Mark Kirk."

Donald Trump's campaign manager also

took the opportunity to jab at Kirk, who earlier this year withdrew his support for the GOP presidential nominee and has been a vocal critic.

"The same Mark Kirk that unendorsed his party's presidential nominee and called him out in paid ads? Gotcha. Good luck," Kellyanne Conway posted on Twitter.

Kirk, who suffered a stroke in 2012 and returned to work one year later, is seen as one of the senate's most vulnerable Republican incumbents. The first-term senator from the Chicago suburb of Highland Park is running in a state that leans heavily Democratic, particularly in presidential election years.

Kirk has worked to distance himself from Trump and the GOP, saying he is an independent voice who can work with Democrats to get things done. He often

MILITARY HISTORY MOCKED. Democratic U.S. representative Tammy Duckworth, left, and Republican U.S. senator Mark Kirk, right, face off in a televised debate in what is considered a crucial race that could determine which party controls the senate, on October 27, 2016 at the University of Illinois in Springfield, Illinois. Kirk apologized for mocking his Democratic rival's immigrant background and her claim that her family's military service dates back to the Revolution — comments that drew wide criticism and threatened an already difficult re-election campaign. (AP Photo/Seth Perlman)

notes his "F" rating from the National Rifle Association and that he broke with his party to call for hearings on President Barack Obama's pick for the Supreme Court.

But Kirk has complicated his own re-election bid with his tendency to make off-color statements. In August, he said Obama was acting like the "drug dealer in chief" when the U.S. made a \$400 million payment to Iran contingent on the return of U.S. prisoners.

He apologized in 2015 after referring to South Carolina U.S. senator Lindsey Graham, who's unmarried, as a "bro with no ho."

During his first bid for the senate in 2010, Kirk acknowledged he had exaggerated some of his own military record, including stating that he came under enemy fire while flying reconnaissance missions in Iraq as a Navy intelligence officer.

Democrats consider Duckworth's success on Election Day one of the keys to reclaiming a majority in the chamber. The second-term congresswoman from the Chicago suburb of Hoffman Estates has a comfortable lead in the most recent polls, but Kirk says the race is closer than people think.

Ivan Moreno contributed to this report from Springfield, Illinois.

Measure 97: a \$6 billion tax on sales – with no guarantee of how politicians would spend the money

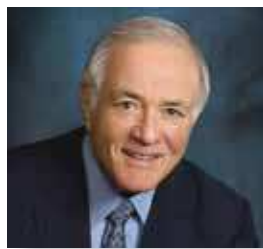
Measure 97 would impose \$6 billion in new taxes on the sales of goods and services in Oregon, including everything from food, clothing, housing, utilities and gas to medicine and healthcare. The state of Oregon's own nonpartisan study found that **Measure 97 would increase costs for a typical family by \$600 per year** and especially hurt those who can least afford higher living costs.

Despite Measure 97's deceptive wording, there's **no guarantee** that the money would go to education, healthcare or anything else. Measure 97 is **not a constitutional amendment**, so under state law, it cannot bind the Legislature's spending decisions. The Legislature's own top legal authority, the Legislative Counsel, stated that **the Legislature could spend the money "in any way it chooses."**



Kevin Richards
Fox Hollow Ranch, Madras

"Measure 97 would increase prices for all consumers and operating costs for every farm and small business. That's why the Oregon Family Farm Association, the Oregon Small Business Association, and other groups representing farmers and small businesses statewide urge No on 97."



William D. Rutherford
Former Oregon State Treasurer

"Since it is not a constitutional amendment, Measure 97 cannot guarantee how the money from its tax on sales would be spent. The legislature could spend the money from Measure 97 any way it chooses."



Bobbi Frost
Harrold's Dairy, Creswell

"Measure 97 would tax the sales of the basic things every family needs, like food, gas, utilities and medicine. That means all Oregon families would pay more and have less, and those who can least afford it – like seniors and those on a fixed income – would be hurt the most."

Vote NO on 97

Learn more at NOon97.com