



Craig's kids defend his honor; Senator assembles crisis team

USA TODAY's Kathy Kiely reports from Capitol Hill on the moves Sen. Larry Craig is making to fight the disorderly conduct charge that he pleaded guilty to after he was arrested in June during a sex sting at the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport.

"What you're seeing is an attempt to lift the cloud he's been operating under," Stan Brand, one of the lawmaker's attorneys, tells [Roll Call](#). "The politics kind of overtook the law."

Brand says he expects Craig to leave office at the end of the month, and explains that the hiring of a crisis team was part of efforts by Craig "to see if he can leave with his honor intact."

Two of Craig's children appeared this morning on ABC's [Good Morning America](#), where they described the 62-year-old politician as a "victim of circumstance, in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Michael Craig and Shea Howell say they demanded answers from their father before Saturday's news conference. They "absolutely" believe him when he says he isn't gay. "It was tough standing next to him, but we are family and we stay together through good times and bad," Craig says. "We know who he is and we stand behind him."

Craig's resignation from the Senate won't be effective until Sept. 30. Idaho Gov. Butch Otter has yet to name a replacement. Sen. Arlen Specter, R-Penn., [spoke](#) out this weekend in support of Craig. But Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., tells reporters that he considers it a done deal.

Asked whether he believed Craig when the Idaho Republican insisted he wasn't guilty of soliciting bathroom sex despite his plea, McConnell says: "I think this episode is over. We will have a new senator from Idaho in the next month or so and we'll move on."

He defends his decision to seek an Ethics Committee investigation of Craig and not Sen. David Vitter, who earlier this year admitted patronizing a call girl service. The Vitter case happened before the Louisiana Republican entered the Senate, McConnell says, so "there's a serious question as to whether ethics would have jurisdiction."

Spokesman Dan Whiting tells USA TODAY that Craig isn't expected to be in attendance when the Senate votes at 5:30 p.m. on Jim Nussle's nomination to be OMB director.

Matt Foreman of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force suggested in a [statement](#) last week that the GOP leadership was taking a tougher line on Craig because his offense appears to be associated with homosexuality.