



## **Gay activist group asks Senate panel to end Larry Craig investigation**

Ethics Committee's actions reflect 'hypocrisy tinged with homophobia,' Gay and Lesbian Task Force leader says.

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**WASHINGTON — The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has asked the Senate Ethics Committee to drop its investigation into Sen. Larry Craig, saying the committee is applying an unfair double standard to the Idaho Republican and his Louisiana colleague, Sen. David Vitter.**

Senate Republicans asked the Ethics Committee to investigate Craig's conduct within days of learning that he had been arrested in a sex sting this summer in the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport.

Craig was accused of soliciting sex from an undercover police officer who was staking out a restroom where police were investigating complaints of lewd behavior by men. Craig pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct without consulting a lawyer and is now trying to overturn his plea.

Yet Vitter, who was identified as having made a phone call to a Washington, D.C., escort service run by the so-called D.C. Madam, got a far warmer political reception, said **Matt Foreman, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force.**

Foreman said no one called for Vitter to step down, and when he joined his Republican colleagues at their weekly policy lunches, he was met with applause.

Craig's reception in the Senate was —and remains — far frostier.

GOP leaders have long maintained that there's good reason for the difference in how they've treated Vitter and Craig. But they've also been careful to draw a distinction between Craig and Sen. Ted Stevens, an Alaska Republican whose home was raided by FBI and IRS agents this summer.

The Republican leader in the Senate, Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, has repeatedly said that they called for Craig's resignation because Craig pleaded guilty to a crime, but Vitter never did, and Vitter's conduct occurred when he was a member of the House, not the Senate. As for Stevens, McConnell has previously pointed out that the country's longest-serving GOP senator also has not been charged with a crime.

The Ethics Committee's chairwoman, Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer of California, rejected Craig's argument in September that the committee lacks jurisdiction to investigate him.

**Foreman called the Ethics Committee's course "hypocrisy tinged with homophobia." It's the first letter ever to the Ethics Committee from his organization, the oldest gay rights advocacy group in the U.S.**

**"We've been disturbed for quite some time at the very disparate and contradictory treatment of Senator Craig and Senator Vitter," Foreman said. "You have Senator Vitter, when he returned to Congress, he was received with thunderous applause, and Senator Craig was treated as a pariah. What message does that send? A man having sex with a female prostitute is OK? But a completely nonsexual episode in a restroom is just horrific? What does that say about the Senate's values?"**

In the Capitol Tuesday, Craig said he hadn't seen or heard about the letter from the Gay and Lesbian Task Force. But he said that he, too, would like to see the ethics investigation end with the committee dropping the complaint.

"I would hope they'd do that," Craig told the Idaho Statesman.

Craig in September urged the Senate Ethics Committee to drop its investigation, but last month said that if he left the Senate, he would no longer have the committee as a forum where he could clear his name.

He declined to comment further on the status of the investigation or whether he had sent any additional letters or information to the Ethics Committee.

A left-leaning ethics watchdog group, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, filed an ethics complaint against Craig a day after news broke of his arrest and guilty plea. That same day, CREW complained that GOP leaders hadn't also asked for an investigation into Vitter's conduct.

The bipartisan committee is typically closemouthed about its work and rarely acts publicly. Vice Chairman John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he was aware of the letter from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, but because of ethics rules he wouldn't comment further on Craig's case.

When a reporter suggested that there had been little movement since the committee was first asked to investigate in late August, Cornyn said: "I don't think it's fair to say nothing's happened, and nothing publicly has come to light, but stay tuned."