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Cuccinelli declines to defend Jackson comments

Jackson remarks on social issues draw questions

By: Markus Schmidt – May 21, 2013

Within hours of E.W. Jackson's nomination as the Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, many Republicans and Democrats alike began to wonder whether the political newcomer who took the convention by storm will help Ken Cuccinelli's ticket — or damage it.

The Chesapeake pastor and attorney, who last year unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. Senate, has linked homosexuality to pedophilia. He has called gays and lesbians "sick" and "perverted" and has accused the Democratic Party of being "anti-God," urging black Virginians to "not betray God" and join Republicans.

In a video message last September, Jackson said Planned Parenthood "has been far, far more lethal to black lives than the KKK ever was," adding that "the Democrat Party and Planned Parenthood are partners in this genocide."

Gubernatorial nominee Cuccinelli, who opposes abortion, distanced himself from Jackson's video comments Monday after the new GOP ticket mates held an event in Abingdon.

"We are not going to be defending our running mates' statements, now or in the future," Cuccinelli said, according to The Associated Press. "The people of Virginia need to get comfortable with each candidate individually, and that's what this process is all about."

After Jackson defeated six rivals and won the nomination Saturday night, Democratic pundits and liberal bloggers quickly circulated many of his past quotes, pushing his campaign into defense mode.

"We won! But the Democrats are already coming for us," Jackson said in an email his campaign sent out Monday, asking for donations.

Lt. Gov. Bill Bolling was among the Republicans who expressed concerns about Jackson's candidacy, terming some of Jackson's past comments indefensible.

"I think most people were surprised that Bishop Jackson won the lieutenant governor's nomination," Bolling said Monday in a statement. "As a result, I don't think a lot of people were aware of some of the things he has said."

"Now these things are starting to come to light, and they are very troubling. Bishop Jackson is certainly entitled to his views, but you should be able to express your views without insulting people, and some of the things he has said are simply indefensible."

“These kinds of comments are simply not appropriate, especially not from someone who wants to be a standard-bearer for our party and hold the second-highest elected office in our state. They feed the image of extremism, and that’s not where the Republican Party needs to be.”

Virginia Democrats turned to two former Republican lawmakers to make the case against the new GOP ticket.

Former Dels. Vincent F. Callahan and Katherine Waddell criticized the slate as too extreme and “ideologically narrow” to incorporate the broader elements of the Republican Party.

“I’m rather appalled by the results,” said Callahan, referring to the nomination by roughly 8,000 delegates of Cuccinelli for governor, Jackson for lieutenant governor and Sen. Mark D. Obenshain, R-Harrisonburg, for attorney general.

In a conference call hosted by Democratic gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe’s campaign, Callahan — the longest-serving Republican member of the Virginia House of Delegates — said the party he worked with for 50 years had been “hijacked by ersatz conservatives masquerading as Republicans.”

“We live in a different society than we lived in 10 years ago, or even 100 years ago,” said Callahan, who represented part of Fairfax County from 1968 to 2008. “I think if we had a Flat Earth Society, he would be running for that” instead of governor, he said of Cuccinelli.

Also on Monday, a blog posting on the site of the conservative CATO Institute criticized the state’s Republican ticket.

In a piece titled “Virginia Republican candidates not joining 21st century,” David Boaz wrote that “on Saturday, the Virginia GOP nominated three statewide candidates whose views on homosexuality and marriage equality range from unwavering opposition to bigoted to insane.”

On “Bearing Drift,” a conservative Virginia blog, Brian Schoeneman wrote that “given the stakes — control of the state Senate for two years — this may not have been the best time to go with the risky choice.”

Larry J. Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia, also said that Jackson might cause trouble for the Republican ticket.

“What we have here is another demonstration of the wisdom of the old Chinese proverb ‘Be careful what you wish for,’ ” Sabato said.

“Ken Cuccinelli forced the party to abandon its primary and move to a convention, in order to eliminate any possibility Bill Bolling could win the nomination. But now the convention has delivered unto Cuccinelli a problematic ticket that can fairly be characterized as hard-right,” Sabato said.

Last June, Jackson finished last among four candidates in the Republican primary for U.S. Senate, receiving 4.7 percent of the vote.

In an October opinion article for The Washington Times, Jackson asked how Democrats have “managed to hold on to black Christians in spite of an agenda worthy of the Antichrist.”

Also last October, Jackson said in a radio interview with Peter LaBarbera of Americans for Truth about Homosexuality that homosexuals are “perverted; they’re frankly very sick people psychologically, mentally and emotionally; and they see everything through the lens of homosexuality. When they talk about love, they’re not talking about love, they’re talking about homosexual sex. So they can’t see clearly.”

Jackson also called homosexuality “a horrible sin,” saying “it poisons culture, it destroys families, it destroys societies; it brings the judgment of God unlike very few things that we can think of.”

Jackson labeled gays in the military as “sexually twisted.”

In April 2010, talking to Christian radio host Janet Porter, Jackson linked homosexuality to pedophilia.

“I know there (are) some people who say, ‘Well, it is unfair to associate homosexuality with pedophilia or some of these other perversions,’ but I do believe that there is a direct connection, because what they want is absolute, complete and total sexual freedom,” Jackson said.

In a talk show appearance last November, Jackson said President Barack Obama may be a Muslim who has misled the country.

“The idea that Barack Obama is a Christian is laughable,” Jackson said on a Web show hosted by Victoria Jackson, a tea party activist who is a former member of the “Saturday Night Live” cast.

“This is a man who has deceived the country, lied about who he really is,” Jackson said. “Barack Obama is at best a confused man; at worst has the sensibilities of an atheist and a Muslim. We’re really dealing with an evil presence. I really believe that.”

Sabato noted that there is a long history of ticket-splitting in Virginia and that since 1969, voters have elected split tickets in six of 11 contests for governor, lieutenant governor and attorney general.

The Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor just became very valuable, Sabato added. “Of course, the eventual Democratic nominee isn’t assured of victory. Jackson is a big break for the Democrats, but it’s a long time and a winding road to November,” he said.

Sen. Ralph S. Northam, D-Norfolk, and Aneesh Chopra, a former top technology official under Gov. Timothy M. Kaine and Obama, are seeking the Democratic nomination for lieutenant governor in a June 11 primary.

Chris Jankowski of the Republican State Leadership Committee, a group that has spent millions of dollars nationally working to elect Republicans to down-ballot, statewide offices, said his group will support the GOP in Virginia again this year.

Asked on a call with reporters about some of Jackson's comments, Jankowski said: "We don't take policy positions on popular or unpopular or controversial issues; we're very consistent in not taking those positions."

He said he thought Jackson "gave a good speech that was well-received in the (convention) hall, he had a good organization, he had enthusiasm, energy, and that carried him through the nomination."