

Romney Sorry For High School Pranks

GOP Presidential Candidate Denies Targeting Classmates For Being Gay

BY KASIE HUNT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mitt Romney apologized Thursday for “stupid” high school pranks that may have gone too far and moved quickly to stamp out any notion that he bullied schoolmates because they were gay. His swift response reflected the Republican presidential candidate’s recognition that his record on gay rights is under heightened scrutiny following President Barack Obama’s embrace of gay marriage.

One day after gay rights moved to the center of the presidential race with Obama’s announcement on same-sex marriage, a *Washington Post* report about Romney’s high school escapades nearly 50 years ago added a personal dimension to Democrats’ claim that he’s out of step on the sensitive topic.

The newspaper reported that in one case, Romney and several schoolmates held down classmate John Lauber and cut off his bleached blond hair after seeking him out in his dorm room at their boarding school in the wealthy Detroit suburb of Bloomfield Hills, Mich. The *Post* said Lauber was “perpetually teased for his nonconformity and presumed homosexuality” and that he screamed for help as Romney held him down. The paper recounted another incident in which Romney shouted “atta girl!” to a different student at the all-boys’ school who, years later, came out as gay.

“I participated in a lot of hijinks and pranks during high school and some may have gone too far. And for that I apologize,”



Romney

Romney told Fox News’ Brian Kilmeade during a hastily arranged radio interview. Romney said he didn’t remember the Lauber incident from long ago, but didn’t dispute that it happened. He stressed that he didn’t know either student was gay.

The Republican presidential candidate had begun the day by treading softly on Obama’s historic embrace of same-sex marriage, which seems likely to fire up liberal and conservative activists alike. He quietly restated his opposition to legalizing such marriages, but his campaign turned its full attention to energy, the economy and other issues.

Then the boarding school story was posted online and Romney moved quickly to counter any suggestion he had targeted students because they gay.

“That was the furthest thing from our minds back in the 1960s, so that was not the case,” he said, adding that the students involved “didn’t come out of the closet until years later.”

According to the *Post* account, Romney was upset about how Lauber wore his bleach-blond hair hanging into his eyes.

“He can’t look like that. That’s wrong. Just look at him!” Romney told Matthew Friedmann, a close Romney friend and one of five classmates who recalled the incident for *The Post*. A few days later, Romney led a group of boys out of his dorm room at Cranbrook

School and into Lauber’s, where the group tackled him and held him down. Romney cut his hair with scissors as a teary-eyed Lauber screamed for help.

“If there was anything I said that was offensive to someone, I certainly am sorry about that,” he said, adding that “there was no harm intended.” Romney’s campaign has previously highlighted the candidate’s reputation as a high school prankster in an attempt to humanize him.

In a second interview Thursday, Romney laid out what he said what his long-held position on gay rights: While opposed to gay marriage, he said states should be allowed to grant various domestic partnership rights to same-sex couples, including the right to adopt children.

“States could have their own decisions with regards to the domestic partnership rights,” Romney told Fox News. “But my preference would be to have a national standard for marriage, and that marriage would be defined as being between a man and a woman.”

He said he would go as far as supporting gay couples who want to adopt children, saying: “If two people of the same gender want to live together, want to have a loving relationship and even want to adopt a child — in my state, individuals of the same sex are able to adopt children — in my view, that’s something which people have the right to do.”

The GOP candidate defended some gay rights when he ran for governor of Massachusetts but was a leading voice against gay marriage when courts made it legal in the state.

Twin Car Bombs In Syrian Capital Kill Dozens

BY BASSEM MROUE

Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria — Twin suicide car bombs exploded outside a military intelligence building and killed 55 people Thursday, tossing mangled bodies in the street in the deadliest attack against a regime target since the Syrian uprising began 14 months ago.

The bombings fueled fears of a rising Islamic militant element among the forces seeking to oust President Bashar Assad and dealt a further blow to international efforts to end the bloodshed.

The first car bomb went off on a key six-lane highway during the morning rush hour, knocking down a security wall outside the government building and drawing people to the scene, witnesses said. A much larger blast soon followed, shaking the neighborhood, setting dozens of cars ablaze and sending up a gray mushroom cloud visible around the capital.

Syrian state TV video showed dozens of bodies, some charred or dismembered, strewn in the rubble or still inside damaged cars. An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw medics in rubber gloves picking through the site for human remains amid the two craters that were blasted into the asphalt.

The Interior Ministry, which oversees the police and security services, said 55 people were killed and more than 370 were wounded. Officials said suicide bombers detonated explosives weighing more than 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds).

“The house shook like it was an earthquake,” Maha Hijazi said, standing outside her home nearby.

World powers seeking to halt Syria’s unrest condemned the attack and urged all sides to adhere to a cease-fire brokered by U.N. and Arab League envoy Kofi Annan.

The Obama administration condemned the attack and expressed concern that al-Qaida may be increasingly taking advantage of the country’s prolonged instability.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta told re-



HAZIM/XINHUA/ZUMA PRESS/MCT
People stand amongst the wreckage after explosions in Damascus, Syria left at least 55 people dead and 170 injured May 10, 2012. Two suicide bombers riding booby-trapped vehicles detonated themselves before the Palestinian branch of a public intelligence compound in Damascus.

porters that U.S. intelligence indicates “an al-Qaida presence in Syria,” but said the extent of its activity was unclear.

“Frankly we need to continue to do everything we can to determine what kind of influence they’re trying to exert there,” Panetta said. He also lamented that a month of efforts to implement a U.N. cease-fire plan haven’t worked.

British Foreign Secretary William Hague said “the onus is on the Syrian authorities to implement a full cease-fire and begin the political dialogue required by the Annan plan,” while the U.N. Security Council said in a statement that “any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivation.”

Maj. Gen. Robert Mood, the Norwegian head

of a team of observers overseeing the cease-fire, toured the site and said the Syrian people do not deserve this “terrible violence.”

“It is not going to solve any problems,” he said. “It is only going to create more suffering for women and children.”

Annan, too, appealed for calm. “The Syrian people have already suffered too much,” he said in a statement.

The blast was the largest and most deadly yet in a series of bombings targeting state security buildings since last December. Most of these have been in Aleppo and Damascus, Syria’s two largest cities, which have generally stood by Assad since the popular uprising against his rule broke out in March 2011.

First

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has funded many efforts, including the industrial maintenance technology program in Yankton.

“The grant has been extremely successful over the past two years,” he said. “Currently, South Dakota has over 400 people in training or that have completed training. That’s pretty amazing, because our goal under

the grant process was 300.”

When the idea of forming the maintenance technology program was in its infancy, Von Wald said Josh Svatos, the general manager of RTEC, visited with industry leaders in the state to see if it was needed.

“Overwhelmingly, the answer to that was yes,” Von Wald stated.

As part of the program, students received a broad base of knowledge in areas like hydraulics, electricity and computers.

“Our purpose was to give you

the fundamental knowledge required to diagnose industrial systems that are common in facilities, whether its manufacturing, a hospital system or another big facility,” Von Wald said. “One of the things that industry wants today is somebody that can do more than one skill.”

Yankton Economic Development Director Mike Dellinger said he was excited about the program because it helps workforce development.

“If we want to continue to be a prosperous community, we need to train our current and future

workforce and ensure our employers will have the workforce,” he said. “If we don’t continue to work on education and training, we’ll lose that advantage we have in providing the workforce at the skill level we have in Yankton.”

“This is a great day for Yankton and the Regional Technical Education Center, as well as MTI, to have the first four graduates of this industrial program here,” he added. “We’re pretty excited.”

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at twitter.com/AnhlandVoyage

Poll: American Optimism On Economy Fading

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are growing more pessimistic about the economy and handling it remains President Barack Obama’s weak spot and biggest challenge in his bid for a second term, according to a new Associated Press-GfK poll.

And the gloomier outlook extends across party lines, including a steep decline in the share of Democrats who call the economy “good,” down from 48 percent in February to just 31 percent now.

Almost two-thirds of Americans — 65 percent — disapprove of Obama’s handling of gas prices, up from 58 percent in February. Nearly half, 44 percent, “strongly disapprove.” And just 30 percent said they approve, down from 39 percent in February.

These findings come despite a steady decline in gas prices in recent weeks after a surge earlier in the year. The national average for a gallon of gasoline stood at \$3.75, down from a 2012 peak of \$3.94 on April 1.

U.S. presidents have limited ability to affect gas prices, which are determined in international markets.

However, the party out of power always blames whoever is president at the time for high gas prices, as Republican Mitt Romney is doing now and as Democrat Obama did in 2008 when George W. Bush sat in the Oval Office.

Ariz. Sheriff Sued Over Allegations Of Profiling

PHOENIX (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department sued America’s self-proclaimed toughest sheriff Thursday, a rare step for the agency after months of negotiations failed to reach a settlement over allegations that his department racially profiled Latinos in his trademark immigration patrols.

Federal officials said that only once before has the agency filed a lawsuit against a police department that they were unable to reach an agreement with in the 18-year history of the DOJ’s police reform efforts.

The lawsuit means that a federal judge will decide the escalating standoff with Sheriff Joe Arpaio.

“We have invariably been able to work collaboratively with law enforcement agencies to build better departments and safer communities,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney General Thomas Perez, who heads the DOJ’s civil rights division, at a news conference.

Arpaio and the Maricopa County sheriff’s office “have been a glaring exception,” Perez said.

The DOJ first leveled the allegations against Arpaio in December, saying that a culture of disregard for basic constitutional rights prevailed at the office, which covers metro Phoenix. Talks to reach a settlement broke off last month.

Girl Scouts Come Under Scrutiny From Bishops

NEW YORK (AP) — Long a lightning rod for conservative criticism, the Girl Scouts of the USA are now facing their highest-level challenge yet: An official inquiry by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

At issue are concerns about program materials that some Catholics find offensive, as well as assertions that the Scouts associate with other groups espousing stances that conflict with church teaching.

The Scouts, who have numerous parish-sponsored troops, deny many of the claims and defend their alliances.

The inquiry coincides with the Scouts’ 100th anniversary celebrations and follows a chain of other controversies.

Earlier this year, legislators in Indiana and Alaska publicly called the Scouts into question, and the organization was berated in a series aired by a Catholic broadcast network. Last year, the Scouts angered some conservatives by accepting into a Colorado troop a 7-year-old transgender child who was born a boy but was being raised as a girl.

Some of the concerns raised by Catholic critics are recycled complaints that have been denied by the Girl Scouts’ head office repeatedly and categorically. It says it has no partnership with Planned Parenthood, and does not take positions on sexuality, birth control and abortion.

CDC: People Ignoring Skin-Cancer Warnings

ATLANTA (AP) — The warnings about skin cancer from too much sun don’t seem to be getting through.

Half of U.S. adults under 30 say they have had a sunburn at least once in the previous year — about the same as a decade ago, according to a government survey released Thursday. In fact, the modest progress reported five years ago has been wiped out.

Not only that, but women in their 20s are going to tanning salons almost twice a month on average.

“I don’t know that we’re making any headway,” said Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, the American Cancer Society’s deputy chief medical officer.

Experts say that even one blistering burn can double the risk of developing melanoma, an often lethal form of skin cancer.

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60TH ANNIVERSARY

Denis & Dolores Feilmeier will be celebrating their 60th Anniversary on May 19, 2012. They have 5 children: Alan (Connie) Feilmeier, Denise (Robert) Wubben, Daryl (Beth) Feilmeier, Mike (Wendy) Feilmeier, and Jeanne (Dan) Devine. They have 13 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. Denis & Dolores celebrated with family at their residence on Easter Sunday. Please call them and wish them a Happy Anniversary or send them a card at 49215 SD HWY 50, Yankton, SD. Phone number is 605-665-7279.

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