

Ketner apologizes for 'outing' S.C. Republicans

Openly lesbian pol says U.S., state officials are gay

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

Linda Ketner, an openly lesbian 2008 South Carolina Democratic candidate for Congress, issued an apology on Friday, June 5, for comments she made claiming three Palmetto State Republicans were closeted gays.

The bombshell statements were made in a FireDogLake interview on June 1.

"We have more gay people serving in South Carolina than probably in any place in the United States; they're just not out of the closet," she told blogger Howie Klein. "We have an awful lot of people in the closet — Lindsey Graham, Glenn McConnell who's our Senate president pro tem, our Lt Governor [André Bauer]."

Later in the comment section of the website, Ketner clarified her remarks, "By the way, in Howie's intro, he quoted me as saying several members of state and U.S. government were gay," she said. "I don't know that for sure, having never been intimate with any of them. Those are the rumors."

On June 5, Ketner wrote on her blog: "I've always been resolute about never outing anyone, believing strongly that every person gets to decide when or if he or she comes out. I let myself and others down in a recent off-the-record chat with a reporter. I obviously don't have knowledge of the sexual orientation of any individuals mentioned. What I do have is respect and appreciation for their service to this state."

She added, "My sincerest apologies to any of you rightfully upset with me."

Graham, McConnell and Bauer have all been the subject of rumors claiming they are gay. Those rumors have never been confirmed and the three have either denied it or stayed silent. All three are single. In 2002, a divorce

action between Bauer and his wife allegedly accused the official of having an affair with another man. No documents ever surfaced to confirm that rumor.

Q-Notes contacted the offices of each of the elected officials and left messages for their spokespersons. Those calls remained unreturned at press time.

Washington, D.C., blogger and activist

Michael Rogers, who has worked for years outing anti-gay, closeted politicians, said individuals should be careful making accusations without certainty or proof.

"As always, I support the reporting on closeted, anti-gay politicians who work against the interest of the gay community," he told Q-Notes. "I am careful to only report on cases of which I have 100 percent confidence and encourage others to not use rumors, whether longstanding or recent, as a basis for outing."

Rogers, whose work is showcased in the 2009 film "Outrage,"

said South Carolinians should do the appropriate research into allegedly closeted politicians' records and actions and have all the facts before going public with any evidence.

Ketner's race against Brown was historic. If successful, she would have been the state's first openly gay or lesbian elected official, along with Charleston's Nick Shalosky, who won a seat on a constituent school board through a write-in candidacy. Ketner lost her race 52 percent to 48 percent. She is being encouraged to try again in 2010. ▀



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