



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 21, 2012

Akin Urged to Drop Out of Senate Race Over Abortion, Rape Remark

Todd Akin, the Missouri congressman who caused a furor Sunday with a comment about “legitimate rape” and abortion, was facing calls from fellow Republicans to drop out of the Senate race against incumbent Clair McCaskill on Monday. GOP Senators Scott Brown, who faces a tough reelection battle in Massachusetts, and Ron Johnson of Wisconsin were among those calling on the six-term congressman to step aside. The National Republican Senatorial Committee will withdraw the \$5 million it has committed for broadcast ads in the Missouri race if Akin stays in, [USA Today](#) reported. Crossroads GPS, a Republican super PAC, has already announced it is withdrawing from the race.



In a TV interview aired on St. Louis station KTVI Sunday, Akin was asked if he believed abortion should be outlawed even when a pregnancy is the result of rape. “It seems to me, from what I understand from doctors, that’s really rare,” he replied. “If it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down. But let’s assume that maybe that didn’t work or something: I think there should be some punishment, but the punishment ought to be of the rapist, and not attacking the child.”

The station posted the interview on its website, and it stirred up angry denunciations from women’s and abortion rights spokesman and organizations, as well as repudiations from both President Obama and the Romney campaign. Akin had issued a clarifying statement Sunday, saying he “misspoke” in the interview, but Republicans, fearful of losing the chance to defeat McCaskill in November, were nonetheless pressuring him to give the Missouri GOP a chance to field another candidate. Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), chairman of the Senate Campaign Committee, publicly urged Akin to take 24 hours to “carefully consider what is best for him, his family, the Republican Party and the values that he cares about” in deciding whether to continue his campaign.

Akin won a three-way Republican primary for the right to oppose McCaskill, a first term U.S. senator, but McCaskill had targeted him with \$2 million in negative ads even during the primary campaign, the [New York Times](#) reported, apparently believing he would be the easiest candidate to run against because of his very conservative stand on social issues. Republicans believe McCaskill is herself vulnerable and see the Missouri race as central to their hope for winning control of the Senate this fall. Republicans won control of the House of Representative in the 2010 elections, but Democrats currently have a 53-47 majority in the Senate.

Akin is so far refusing to leave the race. In an interview on former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee’s radio program Monday, he apologized for his choice of words, saying that “rape is never legitimate. It is an evil act. I used the wrong words in the wrong way.”



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It's possible Akin meant a legitimate claim of rape, as opposed to a false charge. Both Akin and Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), Romney's choice as running mate in the presidential campaign, last year were among 200 House members who sponsored an amendment to change the rape exemption in a ban on federal abortion funding to "forcible rape," a change some abortion foes said was necessary to prevent funding for Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers to perform abortions on minors by claiming they were victims of statutory rape. The term "forcible" was deleted from the final version of the bill.

Politico reporter Dave Catanese was removed from covering the Akin campaign after he sent out a Twitter message defending the candidate from the condemnation his remark had drawn. What Akin "meant to convey," Catanese wrote, is "that there's less chance of getting pregnant if raped." The comment is worth discussing, he said.

"So perhaps some can agree that all rapes that are reported are not actually rapes?" Catanese tweeted. "Or are we gonna really deny that for PC sake?... So looks like he meant to say — 'If a woman was REALLY raped, it's statistically less likely for her to get pregnant.' What's the science?"

A [memo](#) signed by *Politico* editor-in-chief John Harris and executive editor Jim VandeHei explained the decision to reassign the reporter. "David Catanese crossed a line a reporter shouldn't cross on Twitter when he seemed to weigh in on the merits of Todd Akin's comments — especially in a way many people, including many POLITICO colleagues, understandably found offensive," they said. "Dave's tweets on Akin created a distraction to his own work, and to the newsroom as a whole. They also made himself a part of the story, requiring us for now to remove him from Akin coverage."

In explaining his comments Sunday, Akin said: "I recognize that abortion, and particularly in the case of rape, is a very emotionally charged issue. But I believe deeply in the protection of all life, and I do not believe that harming another innocent victim is the right course of action."

Photo of Rep. Todd Akin: AP Images



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