



Paul: No Repeal of Civil Rights Act

U.S. Senate candidate Rand Paul of Kentucky said he supports the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and would “unequivocally” oppose any effort to repeal it. The Republican nominee issued his statement after a news cycle dominated to a large extent by close questioning about his previous statements on the subject and whether he believed the principle of property rights should allow the owner of a business establishment to refuse service to racial minorities.



“I have clearly stated in prior interviews that I abhor racial discrimination and would have worked to end segregation,” Paul said.

“Even though this matter was settled when I was 2, and no serious people are seeking to revisit it except to score cheap political points, I unequivocally state that I will not support any efforts to repeal the Civil Rights Act of 1964.”

Paul said he supports the law because, “I overwhelmingly agree with the intention of the legislation, which was to stop discrimination in the public sphere and halt the abhorrent practice of segregation and Jim Crow laws.” Sections of the law were debated on constitutional grounds when the legislation was passed, he said, adding: “Those issues have been settled by federal courts in the intervening years.”

Paul has been on the political hot seat on the subject since he was interviewed by the *Louisville Courier-Journal* last month and was asked about the federal government’s role in outlawing discrimination. Paul said it should be banned in the public sector or in any institution that receives public funding, but would not say the same about private businesses. He said he considered it a “bad business decision to exclude anybody from your restaurant. But at the same time I do believe in private ownership.” On the morning after his primary win, Paul was questioned further on the subject by Robert Siegel of National Public Radio and Rachel Maddow on MSNBC. The Maddow interview provided the most intense questioning, with Paul repeatedly saying he finds racism “abhorrent” and Maddow repeatedly asking if he believed the owner of a private business should have the right to discriminate on the basis of race.

“But what about private businesses?” she asked at one point. “I don’t want to be badgering you on this, but I do want an answer. Do you think that a private business has a right to say, ‘We don’t serve black people?’”

The *New York Times* and ABC News reported inaccurately that Paul answered, “Yes.” The Associated Press accurately reported that Paul “declined to give a yes or no answer.” As is often the case in live TV interviews, the two were talking over each other with Paul beginning twice to say “I’m not in favor of



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—” as Maddow was asking the question. He stopped talking just before the end of the question, then paused and said, “Yeah” before starting his response again. It was not an affirmative “yes” to the point of the question, but more like a “Yeah, okay, I got your question.””

“I’m not in favor of any discrimination of any form,” he continued. “I would never belong to any club that excluded anybody for race. We still do have private clubs in America that can discriminate based on race.”

Paul accused his Democratic opponent, Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway, of falsely stating Paul favored repeal of the Civil Rights Act and called on him to retract the statement. But it seems likely that from now until November, campaign ads will feature the *New York Times* quoting a “Yes” response to the question: “Do you think a private business has a right to say, ‘We don’t serve black people?’”

Paul handily defeated Secretary of State Trey Grayson in Tuesday’s primary, despite opposition by the state and national GOP establishment, including former Vice President Dick Cheney and Kentucky’s Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate. John Kyl of Arizona, the number-two Republican in the Senate and chairman of GOP’s Senate campaign committee, seemed less than enthusiastic about backing Paul in the general election.

“I hope he can separate the theoretical and the interesting and the hypothetical questions that college students debate until 2 a.m. from the actual votes we have to cast based on real legislation here,” Kyl told the *Times*. Paul appeared to be doing just that as he tried to focus the debate away from the 46-year-old Civil Rights Act and on to the issues of 2010.

“This much is clear,” he said. “The federal government has far overreached in its power grabs. Just look at the recent national healthcare schemes, which my opponent supports. The federal government, for the first time ever, is mandating that individuals purchase a product. The federal government is out of control, and those who love liberty and value individual and state’s rights must stand up to it.”

Photo of Rand Paul: AP Images



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