



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on April 9, 2015

Paul Says He Has “Equal Opportunity” Short Temper With News Media

One day after announcing his presidential candidacy, Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.) admitted Wednesday to being “short-tempered” in media interviews, but insisted his is an “equal opportunity” impatience with both male and female journalists.

“I think I should have some more patience, but I think I’m pretty equal opportunity,” Paul said in an interview with CNN’s Wolf Blitzer Wednesday, after he had cut short an interview with an Associated Press reporter during detailed questioning about his position on abortion. Earlier that day he had a testy exchange with Savannah Guthrie on NBC’s *Today* show, accusing Guthrie of editorializing in her questioning. He ended a February 2 interview with CNBC’s Kelly Evans by lecturing her over a lack of “objectivity.” Paul acknowledged a need for more patience Wednesday while speaking with Blitzer from South Carolina, one of four early primary and caucus states he is visiting in his campaign kickoff tour.



“I will have to get better at holding my tongue and holding my temper,” he said, while claiming to be “universally short tempered and testy” with reporters, regardless of gender. Paul said it’s “hard to have a true interaction” with journalists in an interview by remote hookup rather than in person. “Particularly if it’s a hostile interviewer,” he added.

The Hill [reported](#) Wednesday that AP reporter Philip Elliott’s interview with Paul “became heated” as Elliott pressed the candidate on whether he believed abortion should be legal in cases of rape. Paul apparently decided he had said enough on the subject. “I gave you about a five-minute answer,” he told Elliot. “Put in my five-minute answer.” While saying “in general, I am pro-life,” Paul expressed frustration during the interview over “all these details.”

“The thing is about abortion — and about a lot of things — is that I think people get tied up in all these details of, sort of, you’re this or this or that, or you’re hard and fast [on] one thing or the other,” he said. Paul has voted in the Senate for abortion bans with exceptions for rape and when the life of the mother is in danger, as well as for bans that did not include those exemptions, *The Hill* reported.

“The debate isn’t really about whether government has a role in protecting life; the debate really hinges on when life begins,” Paul told a conference held by the Christian-leaning group Family Research Council last fall. Last week the National Pro-Life Alliance sent out an e-mail to supporters that included



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a letter from Paul, urging readers to sign on online petition asking Congress to pass the Life At Conception Act that defines unborn infants as persons from the time of conception and making them eligible for legal protection under the 14th Amendment requirement that states provide all persons with “equal protection of the law.”

Paul’s clash with Guthrie Wednesday came during an exchange over apparent shifts in some of Paul’s foreign policy positions. Paul began an answer when Guthrie asked if he believed Iran is still a threat.

“Listen, you’ve editorialized. Let me answer,” Paul responded, suggesting “you ask a question, and you say, ‘Have your views changed?’ instead of editorializing and saying my views have changed.” That, he said, “would be sort of a better way to approach an interview.”

Paul had a similar [exchange with Evans](#) in February, as he confronted the CNBC journalist over what he described as “slanted” and distorted interview. “Part of the problem is that you end up having interviews like this where the interview is so slanted and full of distortions that you don’t get useful information,” Paul said. “I think this is what is bad about TV sometimes. So frankly, if we do this again, you need to start out with a little more objectivity going into the interview.”

“I will certainly try my best, Senator,” Evans replied. “We hope you will come back and give us that chance.”

During that interview, Paul urged Evans to “calm down a bit” after she had interrupted his answers to her questions. At one point, he put his finger to his lips and told her to “sshh” so he could speak, a point raised Wednesday by Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

In a statement on the DNC listserv, Schultz directed a question to Paul about his opposition to abortion. “We know you want to allow government officials like yourself to make this decision for women, but do you stand by your opposition to any exceptions, even when it comes to rape, incest, or life of the mother? Or do we just have different definitions of ‘personal liberty?’” she asked, adding, “And I’d appreciate it if you could respond without ‘shushing’ me.”

Paul’s frustration with repeated questioning about “all these details” is reminiscent of third-party candidate H. Ross Perot’s complaint in 1992 about “reporters wanting to know my positions on everything from mosquitoes to ants.” But Paul will have to get used to it, and he will do well to take his own advice about holding his tongue and temper a bit more. At the same time, viewers may sympathize with a candidate bombarded with questions by overly aggressive reporters who keep interrupting when he is trying to answer. One of the stories to come out of Perot’s 1992 campaign is of a conversation, about Perot, between talk show host Larry King and ABC News reporter Sam Donaldson. Donaldson, famous for his aggressive questioning of public officials and candidates for office, reportedly boasted he would “destroy” Perot if he could get him in a televised interview.

“You destroy him, Sam,” King replied, “and he’ll go up 20 points in the polls.”



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