



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 18, 2010

Senate Candidate Falsely States He Served in Vietnam

When Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal pays tribute to America's war veterans and those now fighting in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, he likes to recall his own service in Vietnam. The only trouble with that reminiscence — and the potential trouble it may cause Blumenthal as a Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate — is that he never served in Vietnam.



The *New York Times* reported this morning that while Blumenthal has repeatedly either said or implied that he was among those serving in that Southeast Asian war, he received five draft deferments from 1965-1970 before joining a Marine reserve unit in Washington, D.C., that worked on local projects like fixing a campground and running a Toys for Tots campaign. The *Times* obtained Blumenthal's Selective Service records through a Freedom of Information Act request.

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"We have learned something important since the days that I served in Vietnam," Blumenthal said to a gathering of veterans and senior citizens in Norwalk, Conn., in March of 2008. "Whatever we think about the war, whatever we call it — Afghanistan or Iraq — we owe our military men and women unconditional support." On other occasions, the *Times* noted, Blumenthal spoke of American servicemen serving in and returning from Vietnam in a way that suggested he was among them, particularly when describing the hostility sometimes vented at military personnel by antiwar groups.

"I served during the Vietnam era," he recalled at a ceremony at the Veterans War Memorial Building in Shelton in 2008. "I remember the taunts, the insults, sometimes even the physical abuse. Blumenthal told about 100 military families at a support-the-troops rally in Bridgeport in 2003: "When we returned, we saw nothing like this. Let us do better by this generation of men and women."

Asked about the comments, Blumenthal said he misspoke at the Norwalk event and may have done so on other occasions, but that he had tried to be accurate and straightforward about his military service "out of respect to the veterans who served in Vietnam." Yet the *Times* noted at least eight articles in Connecticut publications from 2003-2009 that said that the Attorney General had served in Vietnam. One said he was captain of the swim team at Harvard, though in fact he was not on the swim team. Blumenthal said he was "astonished" when he read it.

His five deferments allowed Blumenthal to complete studies at Harvard, pursue a graduate fellowship in England, serve as special assistant to the publisher of the *Washington Post* and land a job in the Nixon White House, where he worked as a Special Assistant Daniel Patrick Moynihan, whom he had met on



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the faculty at Harvard. Other prominent political figures have availed themselves of draft deferments during the Vietnam War, including former President Bill Clinton and former Vice President Dick Cheney. But for Blumenthal, the issue may be one of credibility. It calls to mind Joe Biden's delivering as his own nearly verbatim passages of a biographical speech given by British Labor Party leader Neil Kinnock. Biden, then a Senator from Delaware, dropped his quest for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1987 when that revelation was followed by news of his plagiarism in college and of remarks he made inflating his academic achievements. On the other hand, Hillary Clinton's claim that she had come under sniper fire on the tarmac in Bosnia, though proven false, was quickly forgotten during her presidential primary campaign in 2008.

Elected Attorney General five times, Blumenthal became the favorite to win the Senate seat when fellow Democrat Christopher J. Dodd announced in January he would not seek a sixth term. Dodd, the Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, was plagued by declining poll numbers and news he had received favorable terms on a loan from Countrywide Mortgage Company. Blumenthal was thought to be a sure bet to hold the seat for the Democrats, given his track record in state elections and the fact that he wouldn't be carrying the baggage that Dodd had acquired. But his lackluster performance in a debate with a little-known primary opponent and his misrepresentations of his military service may have cast some doubt over his candidacy. He scheduled an event with veterans this afternoon to address the issues raised in the *Times* article.

Republican candidates appeared to welcome the news, but were cautious in responding to it. Professional wrestling promoter Linda McMahon posted the *Times* story on her website without comment. Former Congressman Rob Simmons, whose website says he served 19 months in Vietnam, earning two Bronze Stars, offered the following statement: "As someone who served, I respect Richard Blumenthal for wearing the uniform, but I am deeply troubled by allegations that he has misrepresented his service."



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