

Is 'Soft on Pedos' the Latest Political Pejorative?



Earlier this week, the U.S. Senate voted 53-47 to advance the nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court. Three Republican senators have announced that they plan to support Jackson's final confirmation slated for the end of the week: Susan Collins, Lisa Murkowski, and Mitt Romney.

Political observers have noted that two Republican senators have had a change of heart on Jackson since last June, after President Biden nominated her to serve as a judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. At the time, Lindsey Graham joined Collins and Murkowski in confirming her nomination, while Romney was a 'no' vote. After the SCOTUS confirmation hearing – and a new round of questions, answers, and consideration – Graham and Romney essentially switched positions.

"After reviewing Judge Jackson's record and testimony, I have concluded that she is a well-qualified jurist and a person of honor," Romney said in a statement. "While I do not expect to

agree with every decision she may make on the court, I believe that she more than meets the standard of excellence and integrity.”

It should go without saying that in today’s political environment, a Republican voting to confirm a liberal Supreme Court nominee, nominated by a Democratic president, is not going to go over well with the Republican base... even if that nominee would be replacing another liberal justice. (The same is true of the other side when positions are reversed).

Still, some prominent conservatives took Romney’s decision in stride.

Thoughts: I’m not surprised & honestly not upset. This process is already toxic, largely due to years of Dem escalations. I don’t think it’s healthy for qualified SCOTUS nominees to be confirmed almost exclusively along party lines. Some Senators must transcend that trend... 1/3
<https://t.co/UUxzivENuS>

– Guy Benson (@guypbenson) April 5, 2022

Others on the right had... a very different take.

The only new info since he voted against her a few months ago was increased awareness of her “soft-on-pedos” approach, which makes this new Romney position super interesting.
<https://t.co/n0oWhqiZUz>

– Mollie (@MZHemingway) April 5, 2022

*Romney opposed KBJ’s nomination to a lower federal court less than a year ago, which means he didn’t decide to support her for SCOTUS until *after* he learned of her horrifying history of going easy on child molesters and pedophiles.*
<https://t.co/w2DipvNg19> pic.twitter.com/EVQ0nIRkGY

– Sean Davis (@seanmdav) April 4, 2022

Romney wants a pedophile apologist in the supreme court, your kids fighting WW3 & masks on our faces.

He is our enemy, tread him as such. <https://t.co/anUGQBWq1e>

– Joe Kent for WA-3 (@joekent16jan19) April 5, 2022

Murkowski, Collins, and Romney are pro-pedophile.

They just voted for #KBJ.

– Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (@RepMTG) April 5, 2022

Charming.

I'd say we shouldn't expect anything less from an attention-obsessed nutjob like Marjorie Taylor Greene (though we really should since she's a member of the U.S. Congress, and in better party standing than Liz Cheney), but when you see Fox News regulars (including a panelist from the network's flagship news program, *Special Report*) casually imply that Romney's vote means he's pro-pedophile, or perhaps even a pedophile himself, I would hope that people would recognize and strongly condemn the absolute perversity of such a remark.

The Dispatch's Stephen Hayes did just that.

Why is it super interesting?

Say what you mean. Enough bullshit innuendo.

Are you suggesting Mitt Romney is a pedophile? Or just pro-pedophile?

Coward. <https://t.co/FUfNNEUgoT>

– Stephen Hayes (@stephenfhayes) April 5, 2022

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Sean Davis, CEO and co-founder of *The Federalist*, responded to Hayes by accusing him of “running interference for pedophile apologists.”

You can't make this stuff up. And on a side note, The Federalist famously published columns of support for Roy Moore's Senate campaign... even after he acknowledged that he dated teenage girls when he was in his 30s ... and after allegations came to light that he had sexually assaulted three women, two of whom, the allegations contend, were underage at the time – a charge Moore denies.

Anyway, if all this pedophile talk is lost on you, it's probably because you didn't watch Jackson's confirmation hearing or select coverage of it. Some Republican senators (most notably aspiring presidential candidates) argued that Jackson was weak on criminal sentencing, and they highlighted some child-pornography cases she presided over.

Conservative legal analyst Andrew McCarthy of *National Review* wrote a thorough and helpful piece detailing those cases and sentences, and reached a much less nefarious conclusion than the one put forth by many prominent right-wing figures (including in the media).

A key point McCarthy makes is that, despite attempts to portray Jackson as exceptionally lenient on such crimes, her sentences were consistent with that of most federal judges, appointed by both Republican and Democratic presidents. He also argued that if legislators (like the ones who questioned Jackson during her hearing) want higher minimum sentences for these crimes, they of course have it within their power to raise them.

I wonder if the folks over at The Federalist think McCarthy,

too, is pro-pedophilia, or that he's "running interference for pedophile apologists."

Now, to be clear, I personally have no problem with people objecting to Jackson's nomination on the basis that she's been too lenient with criminal sentencing (or for a whole host of other reasons, from judgement to ideology). Have at it. I also have no problem with questioning why Romney would vote for Jackson's confirmation after voting against it, for a different seat, a little less than a year ago (he's since provided an answer). Lastly, if you think Romney made a terrible decision, by all means argue that.

But if you're so poisoned by politics, partisanship, and careerism that your inclination is to publicly conflate someone's judicial confirmation vote with a favorable view of pedophilia, I would argue that you are truly broken as a person.

And if your impulse is to excuse away such conduct, or pretend some broader point justifies the rhetoric and innuendo, I'd say some self-examination is definitely in order.