Arizona GOP wants to censure Cindy McCain over gay marriage, Biden support

In response, McCain questioned whether the current party leadership represents Republican values.

The Arizona Republican Party will vote on a measure to censure Cindy McCain, the widow of Sen. John McCain, on Jan. 23, in part because of her support for President-elect Joe Biden and for same-sex marriage.

The proposal, which seeks to “dissolve any connections whatsoever” between McCain and the state GOP, says she “has supported leftist causes such as gay marriage, growth of the administrative state, and others that run counter to Republican values, a Republican form of government, and the U.S. Constitution.”

It also states that McCain has failed to support conservative Republicans like President Donald Trump and has instead backed “globalist policies and candidates” like Biden. “Cindy McCain has condemned President Trump for his criticism of her husband and erroneously placed behaviors over actual presidential results,” the proposal states.

She did tell Arizona Central on Tuesday, however, that she isn’t surprised “by the continuous insults and personal attacks from Arizona GOP Chairwoman Kelli Ward.”

Ward is a former state senator who unsuccessfully challenged John McCain in the Republican Senate primary in 2016. McCain went on to win his sixth term. He died two years later of brain cancer.

“As chairman of the AZGOP she managed to turn Arizona blue in November for the first time since 1996,” Cindy McCain said of Ward. “Maybe she should be reminded that my husband never lost an Arizona election since his first win in 1982.”

McCain then tweeted out the Arizona Central article, writing: “Future Republican candidates really have to question if the current party leadership represents their philosophy and values. Time for some soul searching in the Arizona GOP.”

The Arizona Republican Party’s proposed censure of McCain follows a similar proposal that Maricopa County Republicans debated during a committee meeting on Saturday. That resolution was originally aimed only at former Sen. Jeff Flake, R-Ariz., who endorsed Biden last year. During the meeting, state GOP official Walt Steiner suggested adding McCain to the censure proposal, and the crowd cheered in response, according to Arizona Central.

The measure to censure Flake passed. But the state Republican Party later tweeted that Maricopa County couldn’t censure McCain because of a rule that prohibited amendments to resolutions on the floor.

In addition to voting on the McCain censure proposal on Jan. 23, the state party is expected to re-elect Ward as chair, according to Arizona Central.

Cindy McCain has publicly supported same-sex marriage since 2010, when she posed for a photo for the NOH8 Campaign, a group that advocates gay marriage.

Following his wife and daughter’s public support, John McCain issued a statement saying that while he respected his family’s views, he still opposed gay marriage. At the time, even President Barack Obama had not publicly backed marriage equality, which did not become legal across the U.S. until 2015.

Less than a year after her initial NOH8 photo shoot, Cindy McCain appeared in a public service announcement for the group calling for the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell,” a federal policy that prohibited
gays and lesbians from serving openly in the U.S. military. The policy was eventually repealed and officially ended in September 2011.

In 2013, McCain petitioned her husband to support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, a bill that would have barred employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. John McCain ended up voting for the bill — one of only 10 senators to do so — but it didn’t pass.

That same year, the senator opposed protections for LGBTQ people in immigration reform, but in an interview with Salon, his wife said he was slowly changing his mind on issues related to LGBTQ rights.

"I think he's coming around," she said. "My husband and I have differed on many issues over the years. … I think down the line we'll see our country changing. … On this issue I know he believes what's right."