

The Romney Campaign's First Culture War Flare-up

Michael Sean Winters | May. 3, 2012 Distinctly Catholic

[At Politico's "Arena" \[1\]](#), they are discussing whether Richard Grennell's resignation from the Romney campaign will "bite" the Romney campaign.

As you probably know by now, Romney hired Grennell to be his foreign policy spokesman. As you also know, conservative religious right figures like Tony Perkins objected: Grennell is not only openly gay, but when serving at the UN during the Bush Administration, he tried to have his partner listed in the UN staff directory as a spouse. Although he was given a brief that had nothing to do with same-sex marriage - he was not appointed to be spokesman for HHS-related issues or for the DOJ - such heresy was enough to raise the ire of the religious right.

It seems that Grennell's resignation was not forced in the strict sense. But, it also seems clear that the Romney campaign had no appetite for staring down its religious right critics. So, we are left to wonder. In the best case interpretation, Romney's staff simply mishandled this, did not keep Grennell on board their "no comment" strategy, left him feeling like he had been left out to dry, etc. In the worst case, they decided they did not want to get into a fight with the religious right, although that raises competency questions too - if you were not prepared for some blowback, how accurate are the Romney campaign staffers at taking the pulse of their own party? It's a mess, and I suspect we will see many more like it in the days ahead. The man whose candidacy rests on his claims to be able to run a business now has to run a campaign which, like a government, involves tasks not easily measured by purely economic cost-benefit analysis.

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