

Nicholson defends political conversion, pressed on '08 Dem prez primary vote

Posted on Saturday, May 13, 2017

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Possible GOP Senate candidate Kevin Nicholson defended his bona fides as a conservative as he was pressed on details Saturday about his 2008 vote in the Dem presidential primary.

Nicholson, who was living in North Carolina at the time, has said he voted “no preference” in 2008 with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton on the Dem primary ballot. But reporters pressed him on that, saying “no preference” was not an option for those voting in person in that race.

“We’re talking about the counting of paper ballots from 10 years ago, something that governments have a hard time doing on the day of elections, am I correct?” Nicholson said.

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Nicholson said he voted for John McCain in the 2008 general election and gave money to the U.S. senator as he faced Obama that fall. Nicholson also said he was preparing to deploy to Afghanistan ahead of the election and still took time to put up a yard sign for McCain, adding “that’s pretty damn meaningful.”

Nicholson, a business consultant and former Marine, previously served as national president of the College Democrats, but said he underwent a political conversion. He told reporters today that includes serving in combat, having a child, working in the private sector and studying economics in grad school.

“Every step of that made me more conservative than I was when I was 19 or 20 years old. That’s common sense. That’s me growing up as a person,” he said.

Still, Dems have been knocking Nicholson as an opportunist, pointing to his past registration as a Dem, among other things. They released [a letter this week he wrote](#) while with College Democrats inviting Clinton to speak at the group’s convention and praising her “unwavering commitment on important issues facing young people.”

Nicholson said he’d have to see the letter before commenting. He also said what’s important is there are thousands of Wisconsinites who have voted for both parties.

“All those people are going to understand why I did what I did, the conversion that I made and why I’m a conservative today, and I’m going to take that message to them if I choose to run for the United States senate,” said Nicholson, who does not have a timeline for making a final decision on a bid.