

WisDems: Wisconsin congressman Derrick Van Orden reportedly curses at teen Senate pages during Capitol tour

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MADISON, Wis. — Today, new reporting emerged detailing a disturbing incident between Wisconsin GOP Rep. Derrick Van Orden and teenage participants in the U.S. Senate Page Program. [First reported by Punchbowl News](#), Van Orden reportedly verbally harassed a group of pages he encountered in the U.S. Capitol, referring to them as “lazy shits” and demanding they “get the fuck up” off the floor of the Capitol Rotunda, where they had been taking pictures of the Capitol Dome.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Wisconsin congressman Derrick Van Orden reportedly curses at teen Senate pages during Capitol tour](#)

Freshman Republican U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden reportedly yelled and cursed at a group of high school-aged Senate pages while giving a late-night tour of the U.S. Capitol on Wednesday.

Van Orden, who represents Wisconsin's 3rd Congressional District, called the pages “lazy s—” and told them to “get the f— up” off the floor as the pages were lying on their backs in the Capitol Rotunda taking pictures of the building's dome during their final week at work, according to PunchBowl News.

Senate pages are typically high school-aged teens nominated by their home state senator to help out around the Senate side of the Capitol, opening doors for senators and delivering correspondence, among other tasks.

In an interview with the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Thursday, Van Orden did not dispute the report but rather noted the Capitol Rotunda was used as a field hospital during the Civil War for “countless” Union soldiers.

“I would think that it’d be terribly disrespectful to lay on the grave of a soldier that died fighting for freedom,” Van Orden told the Journal Sentinel. “And I don’t know anybody that disagrees.”

He added later in an emailed statement that the Capitol “should never be treated like a frat house common room. Threatening a congressman with bad press to excuse poor behavior is a reminder of everything that’s wrong with Washington. Luckily, bad press has never bothered me and if it’s the price I pay to stand up for what’s right, then so be it.”

The apparent outburst was the latest for Van Orden, a retired Navy SEAL whose two campaigns for Wisconsin’s rural western district were checkered with online outbursts against detractors and temperamental behavior. In one incident from June 2021, Van Orden reportedly berated a teenage librarian over an LGBT+ book display. Van Orden at the time checked out every available book from the display before eventually returning them.

Wednesday night’s incident clashes with Van Orden’s effort to moderate his image since he entered Congress in January and present himself as someone working behind the scenes in a bipartisan manner.

Democrats on Thursday were quick to attack Van Orden for Wednesday night’s actions, with many pointing to Van Orden’s presence outside the Capitol during the insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, as evidence of disrespecting the Capitol and its history. Van Orden maintains he did not enter the Capitol that day.

“Wonder if he told that to his fellow insurrectionists, who were beating police officers on the same ground?” Democratic U.S. Rep. Mark Pocan, who frequently takes shots at Van Orden, tweeted in response to Van Orden’s comments to the Journal Sentinel.

*“Wow, I’m *shocked* that the man who was part of an insurrection, sexually harassed women in the military, and screamed at a teen librarian aide because of an LGBTQ+ display would do something like this,” wrote Courtney Rice, the communications direction for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee,*

which has signaled it would focus on Van Orden's seat in national Democrats' efforts to flip control of the House in 2024. Rice's comment referenced Van Orden's 2015 book in which he mentioned an instance when he revealed a male lieutenant's enlarged scrotum to unsuspecting female officers in an apparent prank.

The Capitol Rotunda was indeed used as a field hospital during the Civil War, but no soldiers are buried under the Capitol Building.

And while Van Orden took issue with the pages lying beneath the dome, the Capitol was also used to quarter troops during the Civil War. Just below the Capitol Rotunda and next to a bust of former President Abraham Lincoln is a plaque commemorating Lincoln's call for volunteers on April 15, 1861. Troops from Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. were quartered in the building in response, according to the plaque.

More recently, members of the National Guard slept in the Capitol — including in the Rotunda — following the Jan. 6 insurrection to protect the building in the run-up to President Joe Biden's inauguration. Van Orden did not mention these facts in his comments.

Van Orden's late-night tour is not unusual for the first-term Republican. He frequently invites groups he meets with during the day on tours of the Capitol at night. About 50 people were with him on the tour Wednesday night, according to an aide.

Punchbowl News later tweeted a photo provided by a source showing bottles of alcohol and beer cans in Van Orden's office, alleging there was a party before Van Orden berated the pages. Van Orden responded suggesting the alcohol was for a gathering with constituents.

A transcript allegedly taken down by a page during the incident and obtained by The Hill claims Van Orden also called the pages "jackasses" during the encounter. "Get the f— out of here," Van Orden reportedly said. "You are defiling the space..."

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