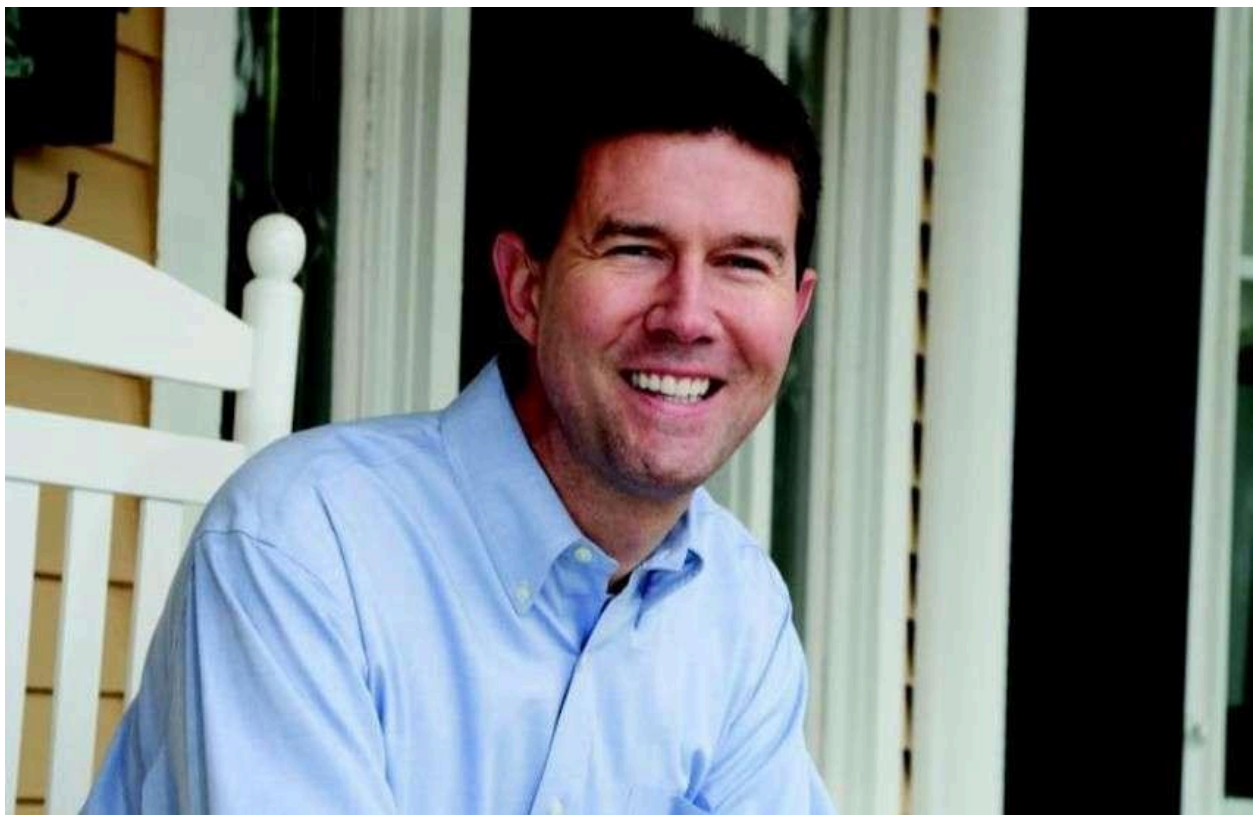


'Homosexual activities' have ruined good TV, says Alabama Republican It's also ruining our moral foundation, according to John Merrill



Alabama Republican John Merrill | Photo: Facebook/John Merrill

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Anya Crittenton

In conservatives' latest claim about the **LGBTI community** ruining moral society, a **Republican** running for Senate in **Alabama** is **taking aim at television**.

John Merrill, currently serving as the state's 53rd Secretary of State, made the comments at a town hall over the weekend, according to AL.com.

He confirmed his comments to various outlets.

'The foundational principles which we have grown up as a nation are no more,' Merrill said at the campaign event in Fort Payne. He specifically lamented the loss of shows like Bonanza, Gunsmoke, I Love Lucy and The Andy Griffith Show.

Criticizing people's tastes

Merrill said people's interest in various television programs consequently show how the moral fiber of the country is deteriorating.

'People are too interested in homosexual activities,' he continued. 'They're too interested in the wife swap TV shows and the shows that are not morally uplifting. That's the problem.'

When AL.com. asked him to clarify, he simply responded: 'I meant what I said. People are too interested in anything that is not uplifting, edifying.'

He also decried shows no longer have 'biblical' foundations. He further clarified the types of shows he was talking about. The shows he advocates 'promote family and culture with a father, a mother and children based on biblical teachings and biblical principles on which our nation was founded'.

Merrill continued to double-down on his comments, telling USA Today: 'There are too many TV shows preoccupied with people's sexual orientation instead of messages that edify our basic moral foundation.'

On the eve of Emmy nominations

Merrill made his comments on the eve of Emmy nominations, which came out on Tuesday (16 July).

LGBTI shows, including RuPaul's Drag Race, Pose, and more, earned several nominations. Many LGBTI fans and critics praised the inclusion of diverse shows represented in the nominations.

Merrill is currently running for the Alabama Senate seat occupied by Doug Jones, who beat Roy Moore in 2017.

HRC Project One America Director Meghan Kissell said Merrill's comments 'only further underscore the fact that the Alabama Senate Republican primary is becoming a race to the bottom'.

She continued: 'Alabamians deserve a leader who fights for the equality of everyone and every community, not someone who would feel more comfortable in America's oppressive past.'

GSN reached out to Merrill's office for additional comment.

Update 16 July, 4:30 pm PST

GSN spoke on the phone with Merrill.

When asked to clarify these comments, he responded: 'One of the things that was asked [at the town hall] was: "What do you think is one of the things that's led to the moral decay of our nation?" And I said, "Well, television, for example."'

He reiterated the same comments about 'shows that helped build the foundation of our country' and how 'media is too concentrated on homosexual activities and things that are not important to our country'.

Unprompted, Merrill then brought up the Women's World Cup.

'What has happened around the narrative of the women's soccer cup victory is that the people who have been reporting on it, who have made overtures about it, have been more concerned about the sexual orientation of these young ladies than their outstanding performance on the field,' he said.

'That's a problem. We don't need to know if somebody's homosexual or heterosexual. That was used to divide us over something that should have been celebrated by all of us.'

Merrill also brought up Jaelene Hinkle, saying her not being on the team because she refused to wear a Pride jersey was 'in and of itself a problem'.

When pressed on the issue of representation, he responded: 'I know representation matters, but people should be inspired by contributions... not strictly by her being a black athlete or a white athlete or a gay athlete or a straight athlete — none of those things should matter.'

GSN further asked Merrill about the merits of kids of color, LGBTI kids, and more seeing themselves in professional athletes and in other areas of media.

He dismissed the notion and called it the 'liberal agenda'.

