

Town reacts to indictment of John Edwards

Community members say they don't see the politician as a local.

By Sarah Glen
City Editor

With a charming smile and a Southern drawl, John Edwards vowed to support the values he believed North Carolinians held most dear when he began working as one of the state's two U.S. senators in 1999.

Pushing a campaign strategy boasting "family comes first," Edwards then attempted to gain the Democratic presidential nomination in 2007 after a failed run for vice president with Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., in 2004.

Now, more than 10 years after exploding onto the political stage, Edwards faces an indictment from the Justice Department containing allegations that he broke campaign finance laws while trying to cover up his extramarital affair with his campaign videographer Rielle Hunter.

The indictment

A grand jury at the Middle District of North Carolina Court in Greensboro served Edwards with a 19-page indictment June 3 that included one count of conspiracy, four counts of illegal campaign contributions and one count of false statements.

The indictment states that Edwards knowingly accepted "hundreds of thousands of dollars" more than the limit for campaign contributions set by the Federal Election Campaign Act and then filed misleading campaign finance reports with the Federal Election Commission.

"Edwards knew that public revelation of the affair and pregnancy would destroy his candidacy by, among other things, undermining Edwards' presentation of himself

as a family man and by forcing his campaign to divert personnel and resources away from other campaign activities to respond to criticism and media scrutiny regarding the affair and pregnancy," the indictment states.

Although Edwards' lawyers argued for an extension to compile their defense, Edwards' federal case is projected to go to trial some time in October.

Edwards is also involved in a civil case against his former aide Andrew Young over the ownership of sex tapes Edwards and Hunter made of themselves.

But on June 16, Wake County Judge Carl Fox stayed Edwards' civil case until his criminal case is completed, fearing that further questioning could cause Edwards to incriminate himself.

"As much as I don't like the idea of staying, I think it's abso-

lutely necessary in the interest of justice," Fox said.

Community response

Although Edwards owns a house on Old Greensboro Road, many Chapel Hill residents say they feel he has never really been a part of the community.

Katherine Kershaw, spokeswoman for the UNC School of Law, said Edwards, who graduated from the law school, was an employee there from February 2005 until December 2006 but left his position before announcing his run for president.

Ruby Sinreich, web administrator for the OrangePolitics blog, said she doesn't consider Edwards as a local because he doesn't participate in town events or politics.

"It's not like you're going to run

into him at the grocery store," she said.

Sinreich also admitted she is embarrassed to have advocated for him at one point in time.

"The biggest offense that he's committed is betraying all these people," she said. "Not only was he lying about who he was, but if he had been elected, what kind of danger would this country be in right now?"

Chapel Hill Town Council member Penny Rich said she thinks the community is tired of seeing politicians, especially males, behave like Edwards has.

"You can't act so poorly and expect it not to go public," she said. "I have no tolerance for this at all. Being in politics, you should be honored that people elected you."

Contact the City Editor at city@dailytarheel.com.

FRANKLIN STREET DISCUSSES EDWARDS INDICTMENT



Howard Surette,
Fuquay-Varina resident

"I haven't given it much thought because I don't really give politicians much thought, but it's a kind of black eye for the state."



Glen Dawson,
UNC senior

"I remember when I first heard about the situation. What a d----e. That's just a symbol of politicians though."



Shannon Yates,
UNC senior

"A lot of politicians use campaign funds for other things. I think they focused on him for other reasons. They should leave him alone."



Chris Clark,
UNC research associate

"He's an individual who made that choice. Politicians have a history of infidelity, so people might think it's systemic when it's not."



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