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Mr. Cuccinelli's bigotry

As attorney general, he would be an embarrassment to Virginia.

Friday, October 30, 2009

KENNETH CUCCINELLI, the Republican candidate for Virginia state attorney general, believes it's "appropriate" to formulate public policy on the premise that homosexuals engage in behavior that is "inherently wrong" and offensive to "natural law." His [comments](#) -- which retrofit the old rhetoric of racism, bias and intolerance in a new context -- were made in an interview with the Virginian-Pilot, a newspaper in Norfolk.

Homosexual acts, said Mr. Cuccinelli, currently a state senator, are "inherently wrong. And I think in a natural law-based country it's appropriate to have policies that reflect that. . . . They don't comport with natural law. I happen to think that it represents (to put it politely; I need my thesaurus to be polite) behavior that is not healthy to an individual and in aggregate is not healthy to society."

Putting aside what Mr. Cuccinelli has to say about homosexuals when he's not trying so hard to be polite, let's call his comments what they are: bigotry. Bigotry is as pernicious today, applied to homosexuals, as it was a century ago or less, when immigrants and minorities were its main victims. And it is just as familiar. Appeals to "natural law" and "intrinsic" rights and wrongs were the usual cliches deployed to justify the old-time religion of hatred then directed at African Americans, Jews, Italians, Irish and other immigrants.

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It is especially alarming that this ugly nonsense is coming from Mr. Cuccinelli, who, if he becomes the attorney general of Virginia -- a job that combines aspects of chief government lawyer and top cop -- would be in a position to act on it. He says he would not ask job applicants to the 166-lawyer office about their sexuality, and his spokesman says openly gay employees would not be "rooted out" and fired. But, since he would be empowered to issue opinions on such questions, how would he regard such firings generally in state government, in which a

110,000-strong workforce undoubtedly includes thousands of homosexuals?

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As a candidate for attorney general, Mr. Cuccinelli has profited from an affability and quick wit that have tended to mask his extremist views. As a lawmaker in Richmond, he has displayed contempt for non-English speakers; for those who care about global warming; and for the First Amendment. Many of his fellow Republicans regard him as occupying the far-right fringe of the party, the ultimate small tenter. The more immediate concern is this: If he is elected attorney general, Mr. Cuccinelli would drive away qualified lawyers from an office that functions as the state government's law firm, and, given his bizarre ideas, he would very likely become an embarrassment for the commonwealth.

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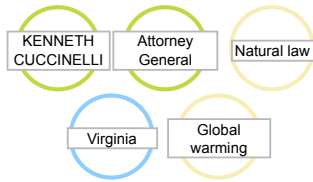


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