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BODY:

REP. EDWARD L. **Schrock's** unexpected announcement that he will not seek a third congressional term represents the second time this summer that a politician has stepped down amid discussions of secret homosexuality. First it was New Jersey's Democratic governor, James E. McGreevey. Now comes Mr. **Schrock**, a Virginia Republican and gay-rights opponent, who has dropped his bid for reelection because of allegations that, he said, would "not allow my campaign to focus on the real issues facing our nation and region." Those allegations, to which Mr. **Schrock** offered no substantive response, appear to be claims recently posted on a Washington-based Web site that he "made a habit of rendezvousing with gay men via . . . an interactive telephone service on which men place ads and respond to those ads to meet each other."

To anyone who believes in sexual privacy, this sort of outing is upsetting. We do not know whether the allegations are true, but Mr. **Schrock**, in any event, is not alleged to have done anything that would hamper his ability to do his job. If he has committed adultery, that is a matter between him and his family. Not every detail of a politician's life is fair game in the public arena; even a public person is entitled to some zone of privacy.

The question should be whether the revelations involve public issues. In Mr. McGreevey's case, the man with whom he had a personal relationship also received a well-paid state government job, possibly beyond his qualification. That raises a legitimate question. In Mr. **Schrock's** case, the ostensible rationale is hypocrisy: Not only is he a co-sponsor of the federal constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, he also opposed President Bill Clinton's far-too-modest relaxation of the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military, the same military in which he served for many years. "You're in the showers with them, you're in the bunk room with them, you're in staterooms with them," he told the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot in 2000. "You just hope no harm would come by folks who are of that persuasion. It's a discipline thing."

Our view is that such comments are repugnant regardless of Mr. **Schrock's** private life or "persuasion." Whatever the truth of the allegations, Mr. **Schrock** has been part of the problem -- that is, a political leader

who used his position to retard the acceptance of gays and lesbians in American life.

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