

State Republicans vote to rebuke former Gov. Marc Racicot

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Feb. 21—The Montana Republican Party no longer wants anything to do with popular former Gov. Marc Racicot.

Racicot, who served from 1993 to 2001 as a two-term Republican governor, was formally rebuked by party leadership for recently supporting Democrats in state and national elections. Racicot is "not considered ... to be a Republican," according to a resolution passed by the state party's executive committee Feb. 15.

"The Montana Republican Party Executive Board, which is [composed] of both elected and appointed party leaders, voted to pass the resolution rebuking Gov. Racicot for his support of Democratic candidates over Republicans the last several election cycles," said Danielle Tribble, party spokesperson, in an email.

That includes his endorsement of Monica Tranel in the race for the state's newest congressional district. A Democrat, Tranel lost to Republican Ryan Zinke in the November election.

In the nonpartisan, but high-profile state Supreme Court race last year, Racicot endorsed incumbent Ingrid Gustafson over the Republican-backed James Brown. Gustafson went on to top Brown in the election.

The Montana Republican Party also cited Racicot's support for the nomination of Justice Kentaji Brown Jackson to the U.S. Supreme Court as well as his endorsement of President Joe Biden over former President Donald Trump in the 2020 election as reasons for the rebuke.

"Concerns over his endorsements were conveyed to the former governor ahead of the passage of the resolution," Tribble said.

Racicot, a critic of Trump, has not shied away from sharing his views on the twice-impeached former president.

"Donald Trump does not possess the essential qualities of character to lead this nation, most especially in a time of crisis," Racicot wrote in an opinion piece for The Washington Post in March 2022.

An email sent to Racicot requesting comment on the resolution went unanswered Monday.

The resolution also accuses Racicot of undermining the state party's efforts and Republicans more broadly. The document lambasts Racicot for failing to disassociate himself with the party at his various public appearances.

In December, Racicot spoke at an event in Sanders County sponsored by the Democratic parties from Lake, Sanders, Lincoln, Flathead and Butte-Silver Bow counties.

"It is recognized that [Racicot] took action to damage, undercut and defeat the efforts of the elected officials of the MTGOP and the Republican Party in general, and therefore disqualifies himself by these actions from being considered a Republican," it reads.

The resolution calls on media outlets to stop referring to the former Republican governor as a member of the party. It also indicates that the state level organization will ask central Republican committees across Montana "to recognize the potential irreparable harm actions taken by

this high-profile individual may have done or may do in the future to the state of Montana, its

citizens and the Republican Party."

Racicot boasts deep ties to Northwest Montana. Born in Thompson Falls, he grew up in Libby — after a detour in Miles City — where his grandfather worked as a logger starting in 1917. A star basketball player at Carroll College, he also became student body president.

He was elected attorney general in 1988 before setting his sights on becoming governor. He later served as chair of the Republican National Committee and played a major role in former President George W. Bush's reelection campaign.

Most recently, Racicot spoke to a packed state Capitol rotunda at the beginning of February, asking legislators to avoid making amendments to the state Constitution. According to Racicot, Republican legislators this session have requested more amendment proposals than in the past 50 years.

As of Monday, there are 61 constitutional amendment proposals moving through the Legislature.