


Young men accuse Lincoln Project co-founder of harassment

1 February 2021

Share ↩

Save 📌

 Add as preferred on Google



Getty Images

Late Senator John McCain looks over documents with campaign adviser John Weaver in 2000



Register

Sign In

[Home](#) [News](#) [Sport](#) [Business](#) [Technology](#) [Health](#) [Culture](#) [Arts](#) [Travel](#) [Earth](#) [Audio](#) [Video](#) [Live](#)

The prominent anti-Trump Lincoln Project has disavowed its co-founder John Weaver after several men accused him of sending them overtly sexual and unsolicited messages.

At least one man was underage when Mr Weaver allegedly first made contact.

In a statement, the Republican group labelled the 61-year-old "a predator, a liar and an abuser".

Without admitting specifics, Mr Weaver apologised for the pain he caused by "living a deeply closeted life".

Who is John Weaver?

Mr Weaver worked on four Republican presidential campaigns before creating the Lincoln Project with other "never Trump" Republicans. He is often considered to be one of the late Senator John McCain's closest aides.

He is married to a woman - his second wife - and the couple has two kids.

After the online magazine The American Conservative reported allegations last month, he admitted his actions to US media outlet Axios.

ADVERTIS

ADVERTISEMENT

"The truth is that I'm gay. And that I have a wife and two kids who I love. My inability to reconcile those two truths has led to this agonising place," Mr Weaver told the publication.

What are the specific allegations?

Mr Weaver has been accused by several young men working in politics of aggressive and unwanted online behaviour.

In the most explicit messages, he offered professional and personal assistance to the men in exchange for sex, according to an investigation by The New York Times.

The investigation included interviews with 21 accusers and looked into their text exchanges with Mr Weaver. It did not reveal any unlawful conduct.

In addition, none of the messages led to physical encounters, except in one consensual case.

However, several men described Mr Weaver's repeated and uninvited advances as exploitative, often fearing they would lose out on professional opportunities if they did not engage with him.

What did the Lincoln Project say?

ADVERTISEMENT

On Sunday, the Lincoln Project assailed him for "his deplorable and predatory behaviour".

"John Weaver led a secret life that was built on a foundation of deception at every level," the statement said.

"We extend our deepest sympathies to those who were targeted by his deplorable and predatory behaviour. We are disgusted and outraged that someone in a position of power and trust would use it for these means."

The Lincoln Project was a mainstay of the 2020 presidential campaign with ads taunting Donald Trump and his allies, many of which went viral and even earned the then-president's ire on Twitter.

The group gained an elevated profile in part because of long-time strategists like Mr Weaver who lent legitimacy to a Republican "old guard" fighting back against the Trump-led wing of the party.

The statement added: "The totality of his deceptions are beyond anything any of us could have imagined and we are absolutely shocked and sickened by it. Like so many, we have been betrayed and deceived by John Weaver."

In an appearance on national television, its co-founder George Conway expressed shock: "It's terrible and awful and appalling and unfathomable, I, I didn't know John very well. I frankly only spoke to him a couple of times on the phone early on in the Lincoln Project. It's almost, I don't even know what to say. It's just terrible. It leaves me speechless, frankly."

Online critics claim the Lincoln Project hid their knowledge of Mr Weaver's behaviours, and did not acknowledge earlier reporting on the subject.

What did Mr Weaver say?

Mr Weaver has not refuted the allegations and reiterated his apology to the men in a new statement to The New York Times.

"I am so disheartened and sad that I may have brought discomfort to anyone in what I thought at the time were mutually consensual discussions," he said.

"In living a deeply closeted life, I allowed my pain to cause pain for others. For that I am truly sorry to these men and everyone and for letting so many people down."

Sexual harassment US politics

RELATED

[Another woman accuses Swalwell of rape, saying he drugged her in 2018](#)

[Next court date set for ex-Radio 1 DJ Tim Westwood](#)

[Parliament staff report 84 cases of bullying and harassment in five years](#)

MORE FROM THE BBC

15 hrs ago

Texas lawmaker resigns after admitting affair with aide who died by suicide

Congressmen Tony Gonzales joined Eric Swalwell in resigning from Congress on Tuesday after facing allegations of sexual misconduct.



15 hrs ago

2 days ago

Democrats were already scrambling in California's governor race. Then Swalwell dropped out

California Democrats were already fretting about the race due to troubling polls and low name recognition



2 days ago

2 days ago

Eric Swalwell to resign from Congress after sexual misconduct claims

Four women have accused the congressman and ex-candidate for California governor of misconduct ranging from sexual harassment to rape, which he has denied.



2 days ago

2 days ago

Eric Swalwell quits California governor race amid sexual misconduct claims

Top Democratic allies intensified pressure on him to exit the gubernatorial race.



2 days ago

3 days ago

Democrats join calls to expel Eric Swalwell from Congress over sexual misconduct claims

The allegations, which he denies, have upended his bid to be California's next governor.



3 days ago



Home News Sport Business Technology Health Culture Arts Travel Earth Audio Video Live Weather BBC Shop BritBox

BBC in other languages ▼

Follow BBC on:

Terms of Use Subscription Terms About the BBC Privacy Policy Cookies Accessibility Help Contact the BBC Advertise with us Do not share or sell my info

BBC.com Help & FAQs Content Index Set Preferred Source

Copyright 2026 BBC. All rights reserved. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. **Read about our approach to external linking.**

