

NEWS

'GAY SEX HARASS' SHOCKER FOR POL; ROCKLAND DEM BAILS FROM ASSEMBLY AMID WHISPERS OF INTERN SCANDALS

By Fredric U. Dicker

May 19, 2006 | 4:00am

ALBANY – Two-term Rockland County Assemblyman Ryan Karben, a rising star in state Democratic politics, abruptly resigned yesterday amid what sources said were allegations of improper sexual approaches to young male Assembly interns.

Karben's sudden and unexpected midyear departure shocked many of his fellow lawmakers, but several others – claiming that Karben was under investigation for some time for the alleged improper contacts – said they were not surprised.

ADVERTISING

A high-ranking Assembly official said he was told Monday by a senior aide to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver that Karben, who is widely known for frequenting Albany's active night life, "had problems" because of recent allegations that the lawmaker made "unwanted advances" to male interns.

A second source, a high-ranking Democratic assemblyman, said he had received the same information.

"I know for a fact that the allegations have been made," said the Assembly member.

Karben, 31, an Orthodox Jew who is married to his high-school sweetheart and has three young daughters, was widely touted as a strong future candidate for higher office.

He could not be reached for comment yesterday. He was not at his Assembly offices in Albany or Pearl River, his private law office, or his home in Monsey.

Karben said in a statement released by his office that he decided to resign because, "It is time for a new beginning."

"After spending more than 13 of my 31 years in public service, it is time for a change for me and my family," said Karben.

"I was appointed to my first public position as a college freshman and leave my second elected office as a proud father of three little girls.

"I am stepping down today from the Assembly to turn greater attention to them and my law practice and to fulfilling other personal and professional aspirations."

Karben's chief of staff, Aaron Troodler, was told of the allegations by The Post and was asked to respond. He never did.

Silver (D-Manhattan) was asked yesterday about the sex-harassment allegations and said he had been in a hearing all day so he had not had a chance to inquire about that issue.

"I received a letter from Mr. Karben that indicates he is resigning for personal and professional reasons," Silver said.

"I accept that is the reason he's resigning at face value."

But several lawmakers said it didn't make sense for Karben to resign for the reasons he gave.

Karben had announced on a Web site that he was seeking re-election.

"Something caused him to resign abruptly," said one Assembly Democrat.

"If it truly was for personal reasons, he only had a month left in the legislative session. He could have announced he wouldn't seek re-election, finish what he wanted to get done over the next month and that would be it."

State Senate Minority Leader David Paterson (D-Manhattan) said he had talked to Karben about running for the Senate earlier this year and "was surprised by his announcement."

Karben became the youngest member ever elected to the Rockland County Legislature in 1997 and was majority leader.

In 1992, at the age of 18, he served on the town of Ramapo planning board. (p. 6 Metro)

Recommended by