

UNITED SPINAL^{NOW}

North Carolina Elects Jerk With a Disability

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Rep. Madison Cawthorn is a jerk with a disability. Notice that I am using “jerk-first” language, and not calling him a disabled jerk, which would be politically incorrect.

Madison Cawthorn is, at 25, the youngest member of Congress. He is a wheelchair user, one of only a few in Congress, and it would be great if we could celebrate the election of a person with a disability – one who rolls the roll, so to speak. Wouldn't it be great if a wheelchair-using, young Republican Congressman led a bipartisan coalition whose mission was elevating the quality of the lives of people with disabilities?

Cawthorn, however, is incapable of leadership. He also has trouble with the truth.

He concocted a false narrative to get himself elected. He has told audiences that he was left to die in a burning car by a close friend. In fact, Cawthorn's father confirmed, this friend saved him.

He said he was awaiting admission to the Naval Academy at the time of his accident. In fact, he was rejected before his accident.

Many news reports stated that before he was elected, he was training for the 2020 Paralympic Games. Of course, anyone could say they were training for the Paralympics, but remember Paralympians are the best athletes in the world. They are involved in wheelchair sports and racing. Cawthorn never competed in any qualifying races, nor has he ever been involved in elite wheelchair racing. Nevertheless, his campaign press office stated that because of his worsening disability, he could not compete in 2021 (the games were postponed last year due to COVID).

Rep. Cawthorn is a toxic by-product of contemporary right-wing politics. He is aggrieved, and spends much of his time on Twitter, taking irrelevant pot-shots at serious politicians who are trying to get things done. He is an ally of Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a proponent of, among other ridiculous opinions, the theory that California wildfires were started by Jewish space lasers.

Cawthorn, of course, spoke at the Stop the Steal rally of Jan. 6, which preceded the insurrection. He is good-looking and is featured on conservative cable news channels. He parrots Trump's positions.

This is North Carolina's 11th Congressional District's version of nondiscrimination on the basis of disability. Apparently, they wanted a jerk and Cawthorn was perfect, regardless of his disability. They easily saw past his disability and elected him for who he was. Cawthorn replaced Rep. Mark Meadows, who gave up his seat in Congress to be Trump's umpteenth Chief of Staff.

Hypothetically, the election of a young, possibly aisle-bridging, wheelchair-using Republican would excite advocates for people with disabilities. In fact, Cawthorn's election is scary. It is obvious that his disabled status could make him a believable spokesperson on disability-related issues. For example, he is for the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. Without it, his paraplegia would be considered a pre-existing condition, and the free market, which Cawthorn touts as a solution to all healthcare and health insurance problems, would leave him uninsured or impose a waiting period before his insurance would cover anything paraplegia-related.

Sometimes, when a politician is as offensive as Cawthorn, we assume that their positions are pretense – that, they know better. Pay attention to this guy – because he doesn't.