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House votes not to censure Lindner

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Rep. Arlon Lindner's controversial statements about gays in the Holocaust and AIDS in Africa sparked three hours of House debate Friday that ended in a familiar result: a party-line vote not to censure the Corcoran Republican.

DFLers said they brought the issue to the House floor because they were unhappy with inaction the day before in the Ethics Committee and with Lindner's refusal to apologize for his comments.

Republicans defended Lindner on free-speech grounds, although several called his words hurtful, hateful and ignorant. Republicans also counterattacked, accusing some DFLers of statements worthy of censure — including denunciations of Lindner as racist and homophobic — and drawing apologies from five of them.

Lindner remained silent throughout the debate.

DFLers filed an ethics complaint against Lindner in March, after he questioned the extent to which gays and lesbians were persecuted by the Nazis and said that his bill to repeal civil-rights protections for gays and lesbians would save children from AIDS and keep America from becoming "another African continent."

"How can you ask one of our members to apologize when that's what's in his



Jim Mone/Associated Press

Rep. Arlon Lindner listened Thursday at a hearing of the House Ethics Committee, which stalemated on a complaint against him. The full House voted Friday against censure for his remarks on gays and AIDS.

heart?" Rep. Dennis Ozment, R-Rosemount, told DFLers. "You cannot stop people from expressing their opinions."

DFLers agreed with that but likened Lindner to former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, who was deposed by fellow Republicans for praising a pro-segregation presidential campaign. Lott was free to speak his mind, DFLers said,

but was rightly censured and stripped of his leadership role.

"Are we going to endorse these remarks of Representative Lindner or make a strong statement that they are inappropriate?" said House Minority Leader Matt Entenza, DFL-St. Paul. "The House leadership can no longer hide from what's going on. Either they will stand up against his behav-

ior or be complicit in it."

A procedural motion to consider a resolution censuring Lindner and removing him as chairman of the House Economic Development and Tourism Division failed on a vote of 76 Republicans opposed and 41 DFLers in favor.

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