

GOP

Tommy Tuberville Has Taken Another Breathtakingly Bad Stance on Diversity

The Alabama senator wrongly claimed that the military is “not an equal opportunity employer,” arguing that it should work like a “football team I coached.”



BY CALEB ECARMA

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Senator **Tommy Tuberville**, it seems, is addicted to controversy. On Tuesday, about two months after he insisted that white nationalists were not inherently racist, the Alabama Republican attacked efforts by the US military to recruit and promote racial minorities within its ranks. “Let me tell you something,” Tuberville **said on** Bloomberg TV. “Our military is not an equal opportunity employer.”

“We’re looking for the best of the best to do whatever. We’re not looking for different groups, social justice groups. We don’t want to single-handedly destroy our military from within,” he continued. “We all need to be one. It’s like a football team I coached. You can’t have different groups. Everybody’s got to be together to win. There’s no second place in war.”

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A first-term senator and former college football coach, Tuberville has often courted backlash over racist remarks. In May, he **defended** white nationalist service members—a position he **doubled down on** before finally coming **to the conclusion** that “white nationalists are racists.” Meanwhile, Tuberville has claimed, without evidence, that teachers in urban school districts are lazy, greedy, and potentially incapable of reading or writing. “Most of them in the inner city, I don’t know how they got degrees, to be honest with you,” **he said** in May.

And then there’s his stonewalling: For the past several months, Tuberville, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, has also single-handedly held up hundreds of military promotions in protest of a Biden administration policy that grants service members paid leave and reimbursement for out-of-state travel to receive abortion-related care. (The policy was put in place last year following the Supreme Court decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.) On Tuesday, asked why he voted against confirming the nomination of **Charles Q. Brown**—an Air Force general set to serve as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff—Tuberville pointed to Brown’s “woke policies.”

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“I heard some things that he talked about, about race and things that he wanted to mix into the military,” Tuberville said of Brown, who, as chief of staff of the Air Force, became the first Black man to lead a service branch of the military. “Listen, I want it to be on merit,” he added of the general’s push for more diversity among military pilots. “Don’t give me this stuff about equal opportunity, because that’s not what this military is about.”

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In fact, the US military has been an equal opportunity institution since it was desegregated in 1948 with the guarantee that it would enforce “equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.”

Tuberville’s latest invective has already provoked a wave of backlash: “The way Sen. Tuberville talks so openly about...white supremacy is just jaw dropping,” Senator **Chris Murphy**, a Connecticut Democrat, **wrote** over X. “I refuse to allow this to feel normal.” **Jim Clyburn**, a Democratic congressman from South Carolina, **called** Tuberville “the worst of the worst,” adding, “The people of Alabama ought to be embarrassed about that.” And **Ted Lieu**, a Democratic congressman from California, **noted** that because Tuberville “never served in the military, he doesn’t understand that the military is an equal opportunity employer. Our military does not discriminate based on race.”

As for Tuberville’s military holdups, the Alabama lawmaker vowed to stand his ground until the Biden administration stops funding travel for service members seeking abortions. “I’m not changing my mind,” he **said** on Newsmax Tuesday. “In terms of wokeness in the military,” he added, “I single-handedly am going to fight this by not letting admirals and generals be able to be promoted.”

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