

# Wacky U.S. election ads hit new low in personal smears, analysts say

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WASHINGTON (CP) - Talk about a blood sport.

If you believe the television ads in an unusually nasty U.S. election campaign, there are candidates who pay for sex, support sex between adults and children, like the idea of giving abortion pills to school kids and favour jolting them with Taser weapons.

No one's expecting a lull in vicious personal attacks as Republicans scramble to thwart the momentum of Democrats who appear poised to regain control of the House of Representatives and perhaps the Senate in next week's midterm elections.

For many, it was a new low when Republicans slammed black Democrat Senate candidate Harold Ford Jr. in Tennessee for once attending a Playboy-sponsored Super Bowl party.

The TV ad was widely denounced last week as pandering to racist sentiments in the state where the Klu Klux Klan was born by featuring a bare-shouldered white woman who winks at the camera and invites Ford to call her.

Amid all the furor, it was replaced by an ad that says Ford "wants to give the abortion pill to our schoolchildren," something the candidate vehemently denies.

But there's no end of negative ads in almost every important race, where candidates are accused of being perverts, liars, hypocrites, greedy, corrupt and just plain incompetent.

Wisconsin Representative Ron Kind, a Democrat, has been accused of paying for sex because he opposed a move to stop government funding for research on the subject at the National Institutes of Health.

That money could have been spent on body armour for U.S. troops, says the ad, which concludes: "Ron Kind pays for sex, not soldiers."

New York Democrat Michael Acuri's rival says he's been billing taxpayers for phone sex. It turns out someone in his hotel room misdialed and hung up in seconds. The call cost US\$1.25.

And Ohio Democratic challenger John Cranley was accused of voting to allow children as young as seven to be tased with 50,000 volts of electricity.

Meanwhile, Cranley voted on Cincinnati's city council against raising the police regulation's minimum age for the non-lethal weapons to 10 after opponents worried using other methods like batons or pepper spray could do more harm.

"I think it's worse than usual," said John Greer, a politics professor at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee who studies advertising.

