

# EXHIBIT 12

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## Hyde-Smith deflects questions about 'public hanging' comments

By CALEB BEDILLION Daily Journal Nov 12, 2018



{span}U.S. Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith spoke at Fairpark in Tupelo on Friday, Nov. 2.{/span}  
Caleb Bedillion/Daily Journal

**TUPELO** • On Monday, Sen. Cindy Hyde-Smith refused to discuss criticism aimed at her over remarks in which she joked about attending “a public hanging.”

During a press conference to tout her endorsement by National Right to Life, an anti-abortion organization, Hyde-Smith would only refer back to written remarks her campaign released Sunday.

"We put out a statement yesterday, and we stand by that statement," Hyde-Smith said, according to video of the Monday morning event.

Reporters present at the press conference pushed Hyde-Smith to speak at greater length, but she refused.

"I put out a statement yesterday, and that's all I'm going to say about it," she said.

She then deferred to Gov. Phil Bryant, who proceeded to engage with media and speak on Hyde-Smith's behalf.

Bryant appointed Hyde-Smith earlier this year to replace the now retired Thad Cochran. All three are Republicans, and Hyde-Smith faces Democrat Mike Espy in a Nov. 27 runoff election.

"I know this woman and I know her heart," Bryant said. "I knew it when I appointed her and know it now. She meant no offense by that statement."

The governor went on to contrast concerns about Hyde-Smith's comments with what he sees as a lack of appropriate outrage over abortion.

He did not single out Hyde-Smith's comments for criticism, except very much in passing.

"I can tell you all of us in public life have said things on occasion that we could have phrased better," Bryant said.

The comments were originally spoken by Hyde-Smith during a campaign stop in Tupelo on Nov. 2, during a swing of the state right before the Nov. 6 general elections.

The event was nearly over and Hyde-Smith, standing near the Elvis Presley statute in Tupelo's Fairpark, was winding things down.

"Y'all have been a good crowd," Hyde-Smith said to a small crowd of supporters.

If she'd ended the event then-and-there, the Republican's senator visit to Tupelo on a chilly Friday would be forgotten by now.

But she didn't stop there.

In the very last words of the campaign stop, Hyde-Smith brought forward a friend from the crowd and in strong language described her loyalty to him.

"I would fight a circular saw for him," Hyde-Smith said. "If he invited me to a public hanging, I'd be on the front row."

On Sunday, a 10-second video clip that recorded the "public hanging" remark was posted to social media, drawing widespread attention and condemnation.

In a statement, Hyde-Smith called the comment "an exaggerated expression of regard" for a friend, with no "negative connotation."

Critics say the attempt at a joke showed a callous disregard for the history of what public hangings have looked like in Mississippi, a history in which lynchings of black people were routinely conducted before crowds of approving white audiences.

The "public hanging" comment was the punctuation mark to a relatively brief campaign appearance, in which she delivered a standard stump speech, linking herself to President Donald Trump and his politics. She briefly allowed questions from the crowd and fielded two, one on insurance coverage for pre-existing conditions and one on shrinking the federal government.

Throughout her remarks, she promised to fight for President Donald Trump's agenda on immigration, healthcare and business regulations.

"We've got to stand firm on the wall," Hyde-Smith said.

She also described for her audience the purported practice of pregnant women entering the United States without authorization in order to deliver children on American soil.

At the time, the Daily Journal questioned Hyde-Smith further about her stance on birthright citizenship and reported on her willingness to consider revising the constitution to restrict how citizenship is granted.

Elsewhere in her public remarks, when she wasn't linking herself with Trump, Hyde-Smith defended herself from the attacks of then-opponent Chris McDaniel.

Without mentioning him by name she called McDaniel a “liar” and sought to defuse his criticism over her onetime affiliation with the Democratic party as a state senator.

“Anyone in Mississippi 40 years and older has voted for a Democrat, I got news for you,” Hyde-Smith said.

Since Hyde-Smith’s “public hanging” comments have been publicized, some McDaniel supporters have criticized the governor for his failure to forthrightly take issue with what Hyde-Smith said.

Earlier this year, Bryant strongly criticized McDaniel for remarks that were widely taken as racially insensitive, though McDaniel denied those claims.

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#### MORE INFORMATION



Espy campaign condemns Hyde-Smith viral video

🔊 1:23 Cindy Hyde-Smith speaks to group in Tupelo

## Caleb Bedillion