



MINNESOTA STATE SENATOR RESIGNS AFTER HE WAS CHARGED WITH SOLICITING A MINOR FOR PROSTITUTION - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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The chair for Minnesota state Sen. Justin Eichorn, a Republican from Grand Rapids, sits empty in a Senate hearing room in the State Capitol complex in St. Paul on Tuesday, March 18, 2025, a day after his arrest in Bloomington for allegedly soliciting a minor for prostitution. (AP Photo/Steve Karnowski)

A Republican Minnesota state senator who was [caught in a sting operation](#) resigned under fire Thursday after he was [charged with soliciting](#) a minor for prostitution, stepping down before the Senate could vote on whether to expel him.

Justin Eichorn, of Grand Rapids, [submitted his resignation](#) in a brief email to Gov. Tim Walz, saying: "I must focus on personal matters at this time. It has been an honor to serve in the Minnesota Senate."

His former colleagues expressed relief.

"Decisive action needed to take place, and we did not want this to cloud up the issues of the budget going forward, and the things that Minnesotans really need," Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson, of East Grand Forks, told reporters. "So we want to take care of this quickly and be done with this."

Eichorn, 40, has been jailed since his arrest in Bloomington on Monday in an undercover operation targeting commercial sex involving juveniles.

At Eichorn's first court appearance Thursday, Magistrate Judge Shannon Elkins ordered his release to a halfway house with GPS monitoring once a space opens up. She ordered him to have no unsupervised contact with minors and only restricted, monitored access to computers and the internet. He did not enter a plea. His next court appearance is set for Wednesday.

Federal defender Aaron Morrison, who represented Eichorn only for the purposes of Thursday's brief hearing, told the court that Eichorn was still in the process of hiring a private lawyer. Morrison declined to take questions afterward.

The nameplate on Eichorn's desk in the Senate chamber was removed before Thursday's floor session. Afterward, Johnson said the charge was "so severe" and the charging documents so "very damning" that his members agreed unanimously that the rare step of expulsion was justified and they were prepared to vote him out.

"This would've been a cloud hanging over the Senate. We don't need another one of those," he said. "So now we're able to get back to work."

Investigators had placed multiple ads online offering sex for money, according to the charging documents. Eichorn exchanged text messages with an undercover officer purporting to be a 17-year-old girl for several days until they arranged a meet-up, where he was arrested.

"I saw your post and (sic) chance you are still available tonight?" one asked, according to an FBI affidavit, while a later message asked, "What's a guy gotta do to get with the hottest girl online tonight."

After his arrest, officers seized two cellphones, a condom and \$129 in cash.

The federal charge is attempted coercion and enticement of a minor to engage in prostitution. Six other suspects were arrested in the sting, prosecutors said. Federal prosecutor LeeAnn Bell declined after Thursday's hearing to say why federal authorities had taken over the case from the county prosecutor.

According to Eichorn's profile, which has now been removed from the Senate website, he is married with four children. He listed his profession as entrepreneur and was first elected in 2016. He got some national attention earlier this month as one sponsor of a not-very-serious bill that would have designated "[Trump derangement syndrome](#)" as a mental illness.

The governor, who had been among the many Democrats who also called for Eichorn's resignation, will have to call a special session to fill the empty seat. Until then, Senate Democrats will have a two-seat majority. The northern Minnesota district voted heavily for President Donald Trump in the November election.

Senate Democrats have come under GOP fire for protecting Democratic Sen. Nicole Mitchell, of Woodbury, who was [arrested last spring](#) on a felony charge for allegedly burglarizing her estranged stepmother's home.

Democratic leaders, who have resisted GOP efforts to force her out, say she deserves to have the legal process play out first. Mitchell was absent from Thursday's floor session where the vote to expel Eichorn would have taken place.

Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy, of St. Paul, said she was glad that Eichorn resigned, but drew a distinction between his case and Mitchell's. She said letting him return would have put interns and other Senate employees at risk.

"It is hard to conceive of a way that Mr. Eichorn could have returned to this Capitol to operate in any way other than putting others at risk," Murphy told reporters. "It is a night and day situation, and they're not comparable."