

# Schwarzenegger supports gay marriage?

*'Let the people decide' — California governor says he's against marriage amendment and ok with same-sex marriage*

by Donald Miller

LOS ANGELES, Calif. — Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, one of the nation's most recognized and popular Republican elected officials, announced on "The Tonight Show" Mar. 1 that he did not support the discriminatory *Federal Marriage Amendment* recently endorsed by President George W. Bush.



**Schwarzenegger on gay marriage: 'fine with me.'**

Schwarzenegger said gay marriage would be "fine with me" if it were enshrined in state law or ruled legal by the courts. Host Jay Leno asked, "Would you have any problem if they changed the law?" the governor replied: "No, I don't have a problem. Let the court decide. Let the people decide."

Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) has introduced a bill in the legislature to allow gays and lesbians to obtain marriage licenses and Schwarzenegger's remarks are seen as an endorsement.

Pressed about *Proposition 22*, which is broadly interpreted as limiting marriage to

a man and a woman, Schwarzenegger indicated he would be supportive of moves to repeal the contentious law.

"If the people change their minds and they want to overrule that, that's fine with me."

Given Schwarzenegger's earlier statements on the matter, his latest sentiments are an unusual development.

During a Feb. 22 appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press," he said of the scene in San Francisco, "We see riots and we see protests and we see people clashing. The next thing we know is there are injured or dead people, and we don't want to have that."

A little reading between the lines might indicate that Schwarzenegger is playing some political word games, but gay rights organizations are praising his latest statements nevertheless.

"The governor demonstrated that he will stand up to President Bush and the extreme right-wing in their effort to destroy lesbian and gay families," says Geoffrey Kors, executive director of Equality California (EC).

According to EC, Schwarzenegger has demonstrated his understanding of the separation of power between the branches of government by noting that he would not have a problem if the court ruled that the California Constitution requires same-sex marriage. This was further evidenced by indicating that he would also not object if the people's elected representatives

reversed a 1977 law enacted by the legislature, that removed the gender-neutral language from the relevant marriage statutes. This law was not affected by *Proposition 22* that was designed to prevent California from being forced to recognize marriages between same-sex couples performed in other states.

"Second class citizenship is something that our community will not settle for and we now have reason to believe that the governor will not object if the courts or the legislature overturn the discriminatory marriage laws and make us full and equal members of the California family," Kors continues. "Equality California will be inviting the governor to come meet our members who are now married so he can learn firsthand the harm that can result because domestic partnerships, while extremely important, do not provide equal rights and protections for lesbian and gay couples and their children. If he is willing to speak with the families that this issue impacts, we believe he will be one of the growing numbers of Californians who support ending discrimination in the issuance of marriage licenses by government officials."

Not surprisingly, California conservatives expressed outrage at the governor.

The author of *Proposition 22*, Republican state Sen. William "Pete" Knight, called Schwarzenegger's comments "shocking" and vowed to stop any attempt to either pass legislation allowing same-sex marriage or repealing *Proposition 22*.

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