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NATIONAL news

THIS MEANS WAR

Bush endorses constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage

by Bob Roehr

"Today I call upon the Congress to promptly pass, and to send to the states for ratification, an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of man and woman as husband and wife," President Bush told a White House press briefing Feb. 24.

He blamed "activist judges and local officials [who] have made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage," citing recent developments in Massachusetts and San Francisco. "Decisive and democratic action is needed because attempts to redefine marriage in a single state or city could have serious consequences throughout the country.

"Marriage cannot be severed from its cultural, religious and natural roots without weakening the good influence of society," Bush asserted. "The voice of the people must be heard."

Bush did not endorse the Federal Marriage Amendment that already had been introduced in both houses of Congress, or any specific language for the amendment.

Social conservatives who had been prophesying the president's endorsement of the amendment for weeks were ecstatic. But many traditional conservatives have expressed their disdain for tinkering with the Constitution for social purposes.

The leading Democratic candidate for president, U.S. Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, has expressed his opposition to such an amendment.

Many observers believe the amendment may be able to muster the two-thirds vote in the House that is required for passage, but prospects seem much more difficult in the Senate. Should it pass those hurdles, an amendment must be ratified by 38 states before it can take effect.

Queers and their supporters were outraged by Bush's announcement.

"Log Cabin considers support for this amendment a declaration of war on gay and lesbian fam-



Queers gather Feb. 24 in West Hollywood following President Bush's announcement that he supports amending the U.S. Constitution to ban same-sex marriage

ilies and an attack on our sacred Constitution," said Patrick Guerriero, executive director of Log Cabin Republicans. They are "more determined than ever to fight the anti-family constitutional amendment with all of our resources."

Log Cabin's executive board decides endorsements for the organization. It declined to endorse re-election of President George Bush in 1992, and history may well repeat itself. Spokesman Mark Mead said that he is not a single-issue voter but that this makes it "difficult" for him to vote for Bush. Part of his decision might depend on the other options on the ballot.

"To use the Constitution to discriminate against our families is un-American, shameful and divisive," said Cheryl Jacques, Human Rights Campaign president. "Americans remember the president's promise to be a uniter, not a divider. Today the president has broken that promise."

Evan Wolfson, Freedom to Marry executive director, said: "Sugarcoating his discriminatory stand by calling for dialogue turns accepted notions of debate on their head. The pretense of encouraging a national conversation about civil rights—while at the very same time taking action to shut down the discussion with a constitutional amendment—is simply unprecedented."

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