

NATIONAL news

Matt Foreman, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director, said, "This is a despicable new low...nothing more than a transparent election year ploy to use our lives and families as a wedge issue into the electorate and divert attention away from the critical issues that face our country."

Dave Noble, National Stonewall Democrats executive director, said: "President Bush fails to understand that our families are more than political red meat that he can throw before his anti-gay base. He has clearly demonstrated that it is no longer acceptable for our community to merely vote against this man. Each one of us now has the responsibility to actively work to deny him a second term."

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom reacted by saying: "Yesterday, President Bush began his campaign; today, his first step is to try and divide Americans. It is the president's sworn oath to uphold the Constitution and protect the civil rights of all Americans; it is a sad day when he turns on his own citizens in order to seek re-election."

Jon Davidson of Lambda Legal said: "Twelve days ago in San Francisco, [the prospect of gay marriage] stopped being an abstract discussion when ordinary lesbian and gay people began getting married," said the attorney, who is involved with the cases. "Gay married couples are no longer a bogeyman that can be used to frighten the country; they are real people with very real needs for protections only marriage can provide."

Joan M. Garry, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation executive director, said: "As America has watched images in the media of thousands of gay and lesbian couples who have joyfully made formal commitments

to one another, they have seen something President Bush has obviously missed completely: that true equality under the law is something that every American yearns for deeply—and is entitled to."

Davidson believes the same-sex marriages that have taken place in "San Francisco will help defeat any anti-gay constitutional amendment by continuing to show the nation that married gay couples aren't a threat and that nobody else's marriage is harmed when loving same-sex couples receive equal treatment."

Gay conservative Andrew Sullivan wrote on his blog: "Rather than keep the Constitution out of the culture wars, this president wants to drag the very founding document into his re-election campaign. He is proposing to remove civil rights from one group of American citizens—and do so in the Constitution itself."

"The very tactic is so shocking in its prejudice, so clear in its intent, so extreme in its implications that it leaves people of good will little leeway. This president has now made the Republican Party an emblem of exclusion and division and intolerance. Gay people will now regard it as their enemy for generations—and rightly so."

Many people have reported that Bush believes his father lost his re-election bid because he did not adequately tend to his base among social conservatives. Some would say he learned the wrong lesson.

In retrospect, it seems the political center of the country was so frightened by the excess of social conservatives like Pat Buchanan at the 1992 Republican National Convention that they went elsewhere. By embracing that social agenda so openly, Bush may have increased the odds that history will repeat itself

and that he will lose his bid for re-election.

"The president has made it easy," Sullivan wrote. "He's a simple man, and he divides the world into friends and foes. He has now made a whole group of Americans—and their families and friends—his enemy. We have no alternative but to defend ourselves and our families from this attack. And we will." □



Former National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director Urvashi Vaid (left) demonstrates against discrimination Feb. 24 at New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center

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