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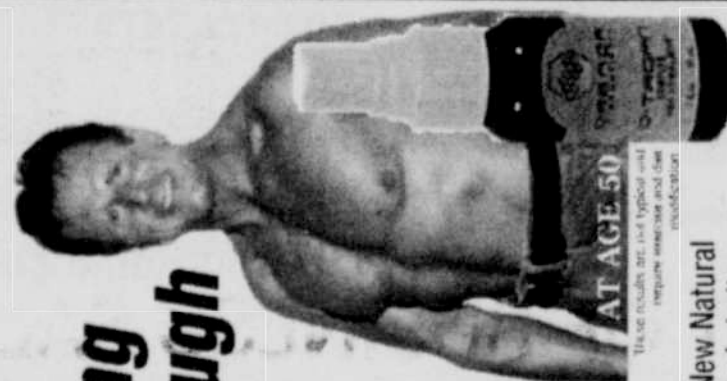
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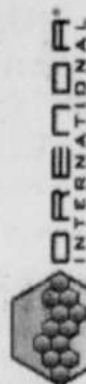
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NATIONAL news

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CALIFORNIA

In an interview March 24 with Fox News host Neil Cavuto, the U.S. House of Representative's top Democrat said she believes same-sex couples should have the right to marry. House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi of California said that she was focused on defeating the Federal Marriage Amendment and that she would not allow Republicans to distract her efforts by forcing false arguments on civil marriage.



Nancy Pelosi

"The most powerful Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives has just come out for full marriage equality," said Dave Noble, National Stonewall Democrats executive director. "In contrast, the most powerful Republican, Tom DeLay, is attempting to use to the issue of marriage to tear Americans apart. The difference in leadership, and between our two parties, is strikingly clear."

Pelosi was asked if she supported the rights of same-sex couples to marry. "Yes," she replied. "And I don't think that they should be discriminated in the Constitution and my goal is to defeat that resolution, and I'm not going to be sidetracked."

Pelosi added that she supports the granting of same-sex marriage licenses by the city of San Francisco. She said she will "use my leadership to defeat a desecration of the Constitution that the president is putting there to diminish freedom in our country."

"We are very happy with Congresswoman Pelosi's endorsement of full equality," said Molly McKay, Marriage Equality California executive director. "We are heartened to see our straight allies step forward on our behalf and support the fundamental right for all U.S. citizens to marry."

NATIONAL

The College Republican National Committee unleashed a vicious attack against Log Cabin Republicans last month.

Chairman Eric Hoplin targeted the gay GOP group's recent criticism of President Bush's proposed Federal Marriage Amendment—or, in his words, "their efforts to stab the president in the back." He claimed Log Cabin seeks "to advance a single-issue agenda."

"Once again, the current administration has decided to divide rather than unite us as promised," said Stephanie Sanchez, College Democrats of America executive director. "It's a shame but probably not a surprise that the College Republicans have chosen to identify with the most reactionary and least tolerant forces within the Republican Party."

Vice President Dick Cheney, who for weeks has insisted that his daughters' private lives are nobody's business and have nothing to do with the presidential campaign, is now championing the private life of his heterosexual daughter on his official campaign Web site.

The Bush-Cheney '04 Web site advertised a public online chat March 17 with Liz Cheney, described

by the site as a "Bush-Cheney surrogate" who is "the daughter of Vice President Cheney" and "married and the proud mother of three daughters."

Last month Cheney was adamant that any discussion of his daughters was off-limits in the political arena. "I really have always considered...my daughters' lives private, and I think that's the way it ought to remain," he said March 2 when asked by MSNBC how he could support an anti-gay amendment to the U.S. Constitution when his own daughter Mary is openly gay.

John Aravosis, creator of DearMary.com and national co-chairman of DontAmend.com, accused the veep of hypocrisy. "Mr. Cheney is all too happy to use his daughters' private lives as campaign fodder when it suits him, but now that he's caught betraying one of his daughters for votes, suddenly he doesn't want to talk about them anymore."

As the U.S. military continues to wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan, discharges of gay and lesbian personnel plummeted 17 percent in fiscal year 2003, according to a new report from Servicemembers Legal Defense Network.

Conduct Unbecoming, an annual review of "don't ask, don't tell," finds that gay-related discharges fell to 787 last year, down from 906 in 2002. The 2003 figures mark a 39 percent decrease in discharges since 2001, the year before conflicts in the Middle East began. The number also represents the fewest gay discharges since 1995.

"Gay discharge numbers have dropped every time America has entered a war, from Korea to Vietnam to the Persian Gulf to present conflicts," the report says. It goes on to note that "more of our allies have dropped their bans, and our American troops are fighting alongside openly lesbian, gay and bisexual allied personnel in the war on terrorism."

The experiences of those allied nations, the report finds, are one part of a growing movement recognizing the detrimental impact of the military's gay ban. "This irrational policy of exclusion has cost our nation, and our security, almost 10,000 dedicated and trained Americans over the past 10 years. That's more than two full brigades. It is also one-third of the 30,000 new recruits that the Army now says it needs to fight the war on terrorism."

The cost of training those discharged under the ban, the report finds, is between \$250 million and \$1.2 billion. "The cost of shrinking the pool of talent for our nation's armed forces is immeasurable."

The House of Representatives approved March 30 by vote of 343-81 legislation that would strengthen the ability of military recruiters to violate university nondiscrimination policies. The measure, known as the ROTC and Military Recruiter Equal Access to Campus Act of 2004, was introduced March 12 by U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala.



Vice President Dick Cheney is championing the private life of his daughter Liz (center, with sister Mary and mother Lynne)