

Theocracy Alert

Ministers of malignancy and Schwarzenegger's ridiculous reasoning

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September 17, 2005—Just moments after the California Assembly passed AB 849 that would have replaced references to “male” and “female” in the state’s marriage code with “two persons,” Traditional Values Coalition lobbyist and spokesman Benjamin Lopez flew into a [tirade](#) replete with the usual nonsensical assertions and political threats.

The State Assembly has turned its back on California’s families ... [the Assembly has] taken it upon themselves to ram down the throats of Californians a twisted, out-of-step, out-of-mainstream version of marriage and family. They will surely pay for this.

It is clear that Democrats are in bed with the radical homosexual community and they are not using any protection ... It is Democrats that are pro-gay and anti-traditional family.”

No, Mr. Lopez. As usual you and the Traditional Values Coalition can't see further than your own bigotry and hate. By approving AB 849 the Assembly confirmed its belief in and support for *all* California families, even those you and the TVC would like to see denigrated and discriminated against.

One has to wonder if lobbyists like Lopez and the self-righteous leaders of the Christian Right ever think about the real-life human beings—men, women and children—they so vehemently campaign against in the name of religion. For all the sanctimonious “pro-family” rhetoric, their theocratic politics are distinctly anti-family and anti-human. It was none other than the Rev. Lou Sheldon, founder and chairman of the Traditional Values Coalition, who [argued against](#) giving aid to the surviving members of gay and lesbian partnerships *and their children* after 9/11. Clearly, Sheldon and his cronies don't see gay Americans as real people, much less equal citizens. And they don't see their families at all.

George Skelton began his LA Times [article](#), “Debate Brings Clarity to Gay Marriage Issue” historically and axiomatically: “The accepted wisdom ... has always been that legislative floor speeches never change votes. Maybe. But they do change views:

"For example, a 90-minute debate Thursday in the state Senate on a bill to allow same-sex marriages: It changed my view.

"Actually, it cleared up my muddled view, which really began shifting eight years ago during a chat at the back of the Senate chamber with then-President Pro Tem Bill Lockyer. [Mr. Lockyer is now California's attorney general.]

"How do you feel about gay marriage? I asked.

“‘You know,’ he replied, ‘people have so many problems and life’s so short, if letting gays *marry* gives them some joy and happiness, why not? I say let them do it.’”

The poignancy was updated and underscored by Mr. Skelton:

"As the compelling debate continued, I kept thinking about what Lockyer had said -- and the people suffering in hurricane hell, the American soldiers being blown up, the gas price gougers. And I wondered why anybody should worry about what we call two people living together in a loving relationship."

Skelton noted that during the Assembly's debate, "there was a lot of talk about God." But like more and more Americans, he recognized that "my god doesn't fret about homosexuality." He also acknowledged that some people "believe that theirs does." Some people are indeed led to believe their "God" hates its own creations.

That's the perverted message propagated by homophobe extraordinaire [Rev. Lou Sheldon](#), as well as by [Jerry Falwell](#), whose "God" okayed 9/11, and [Pat Robertson](#), whose "God" okayed murder and assassination. These ministers of malignancy use the murderous, dung-slinging "God" of [Malachi 2: 2-3](#), coupled with their own obsessive-compulsive need to hate—and sling the brown stuff—to argue that monogamous same-sex parents are not equal humans or citizens and that the 8 to 10 million children those same-sex parents are currently rearing in their American families deserve no social, legal or economic recognition.

The ministers of malignancy succeeded this time, thanks to Arnold Schwarzenegger. A day after the California legislature spoke, and even before the bill was printed, Schwarzenegger's press secretary announced that the governor would veto it. Apparently the Terminator didn't have the guts to make the announcement [himself](#). Margita Thompson made it for him:

"Five years ago the matter of same-sex marriage was placed before the people of California. The people voted and the issue is now before the courts. The Governor believes the matter should be determined not by legislative action—which would be unconstitutional—but by court decision or another vote of the people of our state. We cannot have a system where the people vote and the Legislature derails that vote. Out of respect for the will of the people, the Governor will veto AB 849."

Pundits and analysts agreed: Schwarzenegger's swift decision was an effort to gain favor with GOP ultra-conservatives. As the San Francisco Chronicle [reported](#), Schwarzenegger needed "something to fire up his supporters heading into the Nov. 8 special election. With both his 'Live Within Our Means' budget initiative and reapportionment revamp slipping in the polls, the governor can't afford to have any Republicans stay away on election day." That was precisely the threat Benjamin Lopez had made: "They will surely pay for this. ... If the Governor signs AB 849 into law, I predict he will lose his reforms at the November election as many conservatives will simply stay home in protest." As Mark Leno, one of the bill's sponsors, said, the Christian Right and particularly the Traditional Values Coalition "threw a public tantrum, and the governor jumped."

The veto statement concluded with "Out of respect for the will of the people, the governor will veto AB849." The reference is to Proposition 22, an initiative passed in 2000 that banned same-sex marriage in California. But as the San Francisco Chronicle and Mr. Skelton pointed out, the views of rational, reasonable, socially conscious, fair-minded people evolve:

"Two months before voters passed Prop. 22, a poll by the Public Policy Institute of California showed that likely voters favored a ban on same-sex marriage by 57 to 38 percent. In a poll taken last month by the same group, likely voters were split evenly on the question, 46 to 46 percent, although nearly 70 percent of [conservative] Republican voters continued to disapprove."

A September 9, 2005 New York Times [editorial](#) also took note of that poll and the changing views toward marriage equality, as well as other aspects of Schwarzenegger's ridiculous explanation for the swift veto:

"For years, social conservatives have accused judges of deciding social issues that should be left to legislators. Now Mr. Schwarzenegger wants to ignore his Legislature and leave gay marriage to the courts or the voters at large to decide. ...

"Mr. Schwarzenegger also seems to have forgotten that this nation was founded as a republic, in which the citizens elect legislators to govern on their behalf. Such representative democracy is especially important when it comes to protecting the fundamental rights of minorities, who may face bigoted hostility from some segments of the electorate."

Aside from ignoring the essence of "republic," letting the voters decide every issue sounds "democratic," but Tocqueville was right: there is a worm in the American apple. Canada's Prime Minister Paul Martin put it most succinctly when he said that civil rights is not a popularity contest. The point had been clearly made by a 1968 Gallup poll that showed a whopping 72 percent of Americans opposed interracial marriage *a year after* the Supreme Court legalized it (*Loving v. Virginia*). A "popularity vote" in 1968 would have delayed interracial marriage equality for years. A popularity vote on codifying racial segregation in some Southern states—and probably a few others—in 1950 would almost certainly have delayed African Americans' civil rights for years if not decades.

Civil Rights delayed are civil rights denied, Mr. Schwarzenegger. History is quite clear on that, as it will be on your political pandering and moral cowardice.