

Clinton seeks better ties with gays

Homosexual elected officials invited to White House

By Carol Ness
SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

In what's clearly an effort by the Clinton administration to repair its damaged relations with homosexual voters, gay elected officials have been invited to the White House.

"We want them to give us some indication that yes, they do care about us, that we are an important community, an important part of their constituency," San Francisco Supervisor Susan Leal, who was asked to put the meeting together, said Wednesday.

"At the same time, we also want to hear that they're not going to be giving in to the far right," said Miss Leal, who's working with the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and other political groups.

The meeting would bring some

30 of the more than 80 homosexuals now holding public office together with administration officials responsible for areas key to homosexual interests.

It's being planned for Feb. 23 or 24, with fallback dates of March 2 or 3. Among those invited are San Francisco's other two homosexual supervisors, Carole Migden and Tom Ammiano.

President Clinton — widely perceived as having turned his back on homosexual voters he courted with lavish promises during his 1992 campaign — is expected to show up briefly, though that's not assured.

"I think for perception it's important for the president to be there," Miss Leal said. "We're planning that he comes and blesses the thing and says, 'This is my thing, and thanks for coming and here

are my ideas.'"

Although the idea of a meeting came before the Democratic Party's huge losses in November's election, she said, the new Republican rule in Congress makes it even more important — both to the future of issues like AIDS funding and homosexual employment rights.

"We have been their allies," said Miss Leal. "We want to help, but they have to give us some encouragement.

"Not only do we want them to go forward and maintain things we have, but also not to start backsliding. We're really worried they're ... starting to feel they need to cave in to the far right," she added, using the firing of Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders as an example.

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