

# Denver Post

Exclusive Interview

## VP would back ban on gay marriage

### Cheney pledges support if Bush seeks amendment

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**Saturday, January 10, 2004** - WASHINGTON - Vice President Dick Cheney, who argued during the 2000 presidential campaign that the issue of gay marriage is best left to the states, said Friday he would support a presidential push to ban same-sex marriage.

Cheney, whose gay daughter, Mary, is a close adviser, said recent action by courts in Massachusetts and other states that recognize gays' rights to the civil benefits of marriage has caused the administration to revisit the need for a constitutional amendment.

Cheney made his comments on gay marriage during an interview with The Denver Post, in which he also spoke about the war in Iraq and the U.S. soldiers being killed and wounded there, Western energy issues, and the Air Force Academy sex scandal. His comments regarding the sacrifice of U.S. soldiers and their families came one day after a Black Hawk helicopter crashed near Fallujah in Iraq, killing all nine soldiers on board, including at least four Fort Carson soldiers.

Cheney, who has visited Fort Carson in the past, will visit Denver on Monday during a campaign and fundraising stop.

Colorado has become a focal point in the effort to ban gay marriage, with four members of its congressional delegation having drafted or supported legislation late last year restricting marriage to a "union between a man and a woman." During the interview, Cheney said he will support President Bush if the president pursues a ban on gay marriage.

"What I said in 2000 was that the question of whether or not some sort of status, legal status or sanction, ought to be granted in the case of a relationship between two individuals of the same sex was historically a matter the states had decided and resolved, and that is the way I preferred it," Cheney said.

But "at this stage, obviously, the president is going to have to make a decision in terms of what administration policy is on this particular provision, and I will support whatever decision he makes," Cheney said.

#### Daughter in prominent role

Cheney declined to say whether he has discussed the issue of same-sex marriage with the president, or has shared his perspective as the parent of a gay daughter.

"I don't talk about the advice I give the president," Cheney said. "That is why he listens."

Mary Cheney is a well-known figure in the Colorado gay community, having worked for the Colorado Rockies baseball team and Coors Brewing Co., where, among other duties, she worked on outreach to gays and lesbians.

She worked as a personal aide to her father in the 2000 presidential campaign, when her longtime relationship with her lesbian partner briefly became grist for the national news. She received her

MBA from the University of Denver in 2002 and joined the Bush-Cheney '04 campaign last July as the director of vice presidential operations.

In a nationally televised debate in 2000 with the Democratic vice presidential candidate, Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, Cheney was asked about gay marriage.

"The fact of the matter is, we live in a free society, and freedom means freedom for everybody," Cheney said. "And I think that means that people should be free to enter into any kind of relationship they want to enter into. It's really no one else's business in terms of trying to regulate or prohibit behavior in that regard."

"The next step, then ... is the question you ask of whether or not there ought to be some kind of official sanction, if you will, of the relationship. That matter is regulated by the states. I think different states are likely to come to different conclusions, and that's appropriate. I don't think there should necessarily be a federal policy in this area."

There already is a federal law - the Defense of Marriage Act - that defines marriage as a union only between a man and a woman.

But some conservatives, including Colorado Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Loveland, and Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Fort Morgan, believe the Defense of Marriage Act is insufficient protection, and have sponsored a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriages.

"Everybody is concerned (that) recent court cases, in Massachusetts, for example, raise the possibility here that the Defense of Marriage Act that is already on the books, that has been broadly supported, may not stand the test, and therefore they are looking at other measures, such as a constitutional amendment," Cheney said.

Bush said recently that he believes marriage should recognize only the union of a man and a woman, and that he may back a constitutional amendment or other federal action if the administration's lawyers feel it is necessary.

, a gay Democratic congressman from Massachusetts, said the vice president should state clearly whether he has changed his position since 2000, rather than "mumbling" on the issue. Since Cheney's statement eased the concerns of gay voters about the Republican ticket in 2000, Frank said, the vice president owes gays and lesbians a clearer explanation about his thinking now. "This is something he got votes with a month before the (2000) election," Frank said, noting how close that contest was.

Strong support for war

Elsewhere in the interview, Cheney recalled previous visits to Fort Carson, where elements of the 4th Infantry Division, which has suffered a high number of casualties in Iraq, are based, and more recently to wounded soldiers at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

"They of course have paid a heavy price," Cheney said. "We are enormously fortunate as a country to have young men and women of that caliber who are willing to take on obviously one of the most difficult assignments in terms of providing for the safety and security of the nation."

When asked if continued casualties might spur him to rethink his strong and early support for the war, Cheney said, "No."

"I think there is no question but that the policy was absolutely sound, the right thing to do," he said. "I can think of few times in our history where there has ever been so close a link between what our

forces are asked to do overseas and our safety and security here at home. That has been true since 9/11.

"With respect to our operations in Iraq, I think they have been enormously successful. We have taken down one of the most brutal dictatorial regimes in modern history, and we've also had enormous success in Afghanistan."

Cheney, a former secretary of defense, said he was aware "of the controversies and the problems out at the Air Force Academy" but that the scandal there, and the findings from a series of investigative reports by The Post concerning domestic violence and sexual assault in the military, had not become a matter for White House action.

The vice president expressed confidence that the Defense Department is doing "a good job with these difficult issues" and said, "It is absolutely vital that it be clear to everybody that we will not tolerate that kind of behavior anywhere in the armed services."

Cheney will appear in Colorado this week to campaign and raise funds for the presidential re-election effort, with Gov. Bill Owens, Allard and Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell functioning as honorary chairmen. Cheney brushed aside suggestions that Campbell might decide to forgo the race, saying he has a 100 percent commitment from Campbell that the senator will run for re-election.

In a similar vein, Cheney said his doctors have kept careful track of his health and heart troubles, and that he has assured the president that he is able and willing to assist in a re-election campaign and serve a second term.

The vice president defended the administration's recent bullish efforts to expand exploration and production of natural gas in the Rocky Mountain region. "There is such an enormous demand for gas out there around the country. Prices are high, and we need to develop those resources from the standpoint of our national energy requirements," he said.

When asked about the environmental cost of such production, Cheney expressed confidence that development could go hand in hand with conservation.

"One of the things I was always sensitive to as a Wyoming congressman was all those folks on both coasts who want to tell us how to do our business in the Rocky Mountains when in fact we have done a great job protecting and preserving the environment over the years," Cheney said. "That is why they like to come to places like Jackson Hole and Aspen to vacation."