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# White House calls gay 'marriage' order 'troubling'

By James G. Lakely  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The White House says President Bush considers "deeply troubling" the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's ruling that homosexuals must be given the full right of marriage, and his spokesman chided "activist judges" who "seek to redefine marriage by court order."

"He believes it's an issue of great consequence," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan yesterday. "That's why he said [in last month's State of the Union address] that the people's voice must be heard."

"And I will continue to reiterate what he said at the time, that if judges continue to force their arbitrary will upon the people, that the only alternative to the people would be a constitutional process," Mr. McClellan said.

The Massachusetts high court ruled yesterday that only full, equal marriage rights for homosexual couples — rather than civil unions — would meet the requirements of its November decision approving homosexual "marriage." The ruling erases any doubt that the nation's first same-sex "mar-

## Massachusetts court may spur Bush to pursue amendment

riages" would take place in the state beginning in mid-May.

None of the major Democratic contenders for their party's presidential nomination returned calls for comment yesterday.

When pressed, Mr. McClellan declined to say whether this ruling constitutes a "tipping point" for Mr. Bush to begin actively pushing for a constitutional amendment to define marriage as between one man and one woman.

"This ruling is deeply troubling," Mr. McClellan said. "The president is firmly committed to protecting and defending the sanctity of marriage. . . . We are going to be reviewing this decision, but it is deeply troubling."

Republican political consultant Scott Reed said Mr. Bush is "positioned perfectly" on gay "marriage," because his opposition to it is in line with polls that show roughly 60 percent of the public agrees with him.

However, he advised the president to be "very careful

with this issue."

"There is no need to beat it like a drum," Mr. Reed said. "You have to see how the [presidential] campaign develops — both the campaign against the Democrats and by the social conservatives in the Republican Party."

Conservative groups, which constitute Mr. Bush's political base, are already agitating for the president to lead on this issue.

"The decision today underscores the need to do whatever is necessary in both the legal and legislative arenas — including pursuing a constitutional amendment — to protect marriage, which is a sacred institution between one man and one woman," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice.

Sen. John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat and the front-runner for his party's presidential nomination, has said he opposes homosexual "marriage," but he was one of only 14

senators to vote against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 that defined marriage as being between a man and a woman.

Mr. Kerry had defended his vote by characterizing the Defense of Marriage Act as "gay bashing on the floor of the United States Senate."

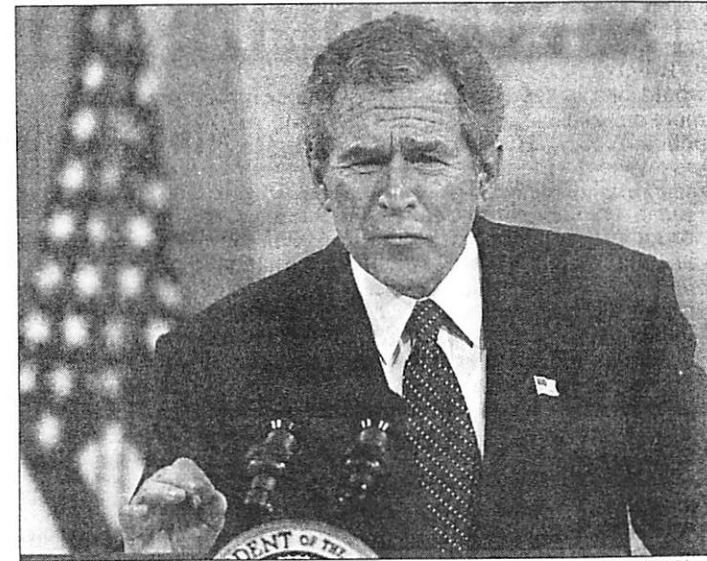
Michael Meehan, a senior adviser for the Kerry campaign, told Fox News yesterday that Mr. Kerry opposes homosexual "marriage," but that he still "thinks there's a lot of gay bashing going on, and he won't stand for that."

Asked earlier this week by the Village Voice what Mr. Kerry's response would be to the ruling made by the Massachusetts highest court, Tom Daley, Mr. Kerry's national liaison to homosexuals, told the liberal weekly newspaper that his boss is "right there with it."

Mr. Reed said the issue puts all the Democrats in the "hot seat."

"But Kerry's in the hottest seat," Mr. Reed said, because of his voting record and the fact that the ruling came from his home state.

Former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean has said he was "proud to sign the nation's first



Associated Press

President Bush has said if judges continue to legitimize homosexual "marriage," an amendment to the U.S. Constitution may be necessary to define the union as one only between a woman and a man.

law establishing civil unions for same-sex couples," but has also said he opposes raising that status to official marriage.

Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina has said he favors letting states decide the question of gay "marriage." And Wesley

Clark has generally avoided the issue on the campaign trail, but has said that "families come in many shapes and sizes" and was in favor of giving same-sex couples the "same rights and responsibilities" as heterosexual couples.