



Activists Commend San Diego Mayor for Change of Heart on Gay Marriage

by Chrys Hudson
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San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders made headlines around the country last Wednesday when he announced during a press conference that he would sign a City Council resolution directing the city attorney to file a brief in support of same-sex marriage with the California Supreme Court. Sanders previously said he would veto the resolution.

Talking to the press with wife Rana by his side, the mayor said: "As I reflected... I just could not bring myself to tell an entire group of people in our community that they were less important, less worthy and less deserving of the rights and responsibilities of marriage-than anyone else-simply because of their sexual orientation.

"I have close family members and friends who are members of the gay and lesbian community," he added. "These folks include my daughter Lisa and her partner, as well as members of my personal staff. I want for them the same thing that we all want for our loved ones-for each of them to find a mate whom they love deeply and who loves them back; someone with whom they can grow old together and share life's wondrous adventures. And I want their relationships to be protected equally under the law. In the end, I could not look any of them in the face and tell them that their relationships-their very lives-were any less meaningful than the marriage that I share with my wife."

Gay rights groups quickly lauded Sanders for his about-face, including Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders' emotional statement brought me-and I know millions of other gay and lesbian people-to tears," he said in a statement released Thursday. "Simply, directly, and most importantly from the heart, he said what we yearn to hear from our leaders-that our relationships are just as meaningful and just as deserving of the same protections as everyone else's.

"Mayor Sanders will go into the history books as a profile in courage and conviction," Foreman added. "He stands in stark contrast to Governor [Arnold] Schwarzenegger's threatened veto of the marriage equality bill that will be on his desk within days and to leading Democratic presidential candidates who cannot bring themselves to say we are truly equal."

Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, also praised Sanders late last week.

"I would like to thank Mayor Sanders for his decision to stand up for marriage equality," Solmonese said in a release. "His emotional plea for equal protection under the law transcends politics and shows that he is someone who leads with his heart. We at HRC thank him for his support and for serving as an example of a public official who truly values all his constituents."