

The New York Times
nytimes.com/movies

Get
showtimes.

See
Critics'
Picks.

Romney's Tone on Gay Rights Is Seen as Shift

More Articles in

Great Getaways -



Sign up for travel
advertisers. See S
willjasen@gma
Change E-mail Ac



Cheryl Senter for The New York Times

Mitt Romney, who campaigned on Friday in Littleton, N.H., once promised he would not lead a fight against same-sex marriage.

By **MICHAEL LUO**

Published: September 8, 2007

Mitt Romney seemed comfortable as a group of gay **Republicans** quizzed him over breakfast one morning in 2002. Running for governor of Massachusetts, he was at a gay bar in Boston to court members of Log Cabin Republicans.

Multimedia

1994

"I think the gay commur
the Republican Party, a
Republican Party to for

Mr. Romney explained to the group that his perspective on gay rights had been largely shaped by his experience in the private sector, where, he said, discrimination was frowned upon. When the discussion turned to a court case on same-sex marriage that was then wending its way

E-MAIL

PRINT

REPRINTS

SAVE

SHARE



The New H

In Kathle

Also in Theatre

- [Hank Azaria](#)
- [Tony Roberts](#)
- [Hear the mus](#)

MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED BLC

Blog The Caucus

The latest political news from around the nation.

[Join the discussion.](#)

- [Candidate Topic Pages](#)
- [More Politics News](#)



through the state's judicial system, he said he believed that marriage should be limited to the union of a man and a woman. But, according to several people present, he promised to obey the courts' ultimate ruling and not champion a fight on either side of the issue.

"I'll keep my head low," he said, making a bobbing motion with his head like a boxer, one participant recalled.

A year after his election, Massachusetts' highest court legalized same-sex marriage, and Mr. Romney began backing adoption of a state constitutional amendment to ban it. The proposal ultimately failed, but Mr. Romney has carried the fight to the presidential campaign trail, an ever more visible crusader against such unions as he works to position himself among conservatives.

Indeed, the issue has become a bedrock of his message. He has fought same-sex marriage "every way I have known how to," he said recently in Iowa, "and the fight isn't over." He has called for the federal Constitution to be amended, and he was the first presidential candidate to condemn last week's ruling by a judge in Iowa that overturned that state's ban on such marriages.

Mr. Romney bristles when he is accused of shifting on the issue, as he has on abortion, pointing out that he has been consistent in personally opposing both marriage and civil unions between people of the same sex.

On the stump, he usually makes a point of saying that he opposes discrimination against gays. But he refrains from details when pressed as to how he might fight it.

Jonathan Spampinato, a Republican activist who is openly gay and worked as Mr. Romney's deputy political director during the run for governor, says he always felt that Mr. Romney was comfortable with gays. When it came to gay rights beyond the issue of marriage, Mr. Spampinato recalls, Mr. Romney asserted during that campaign that there was only the smallest difference between himself, a supporter of domestic partnership rights like survivorship and hospital visitation, and his Democratic opponent, Shannon O'Brien, who backed civil unions.

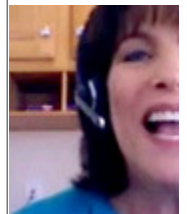
"He explained his position to Log Cabin club members early on," Mr. Spampinato remembered, "by saying, 'Regardless of what you call it, if you look at the benefits I support and the benefits Shannon supports, there's probably a hair of difference.'"

Calling Mr. Romney a flip-flopper on gay rights would be overly simplistic, Mr. Spampinato said. But he conceded that his old boss had promised the Log Cabin members that he would not champion a fight against same-sex marriage.

1. [Co-Payme](#)
2. [Housing V](#)
3. [Cairo Jou](#)
[Scream](#)
4. [William K](#)
5. [Dick Cave](#)
[Laughs, P](#)
6. [Journeys](#)
[Centuries](#)
7. [Despite T](#)
8. [Link by Li](#)
[Computer](#)
9. [Roger Col](#)
10. [Munich R](#)

[Go to Complete](#)

The New H



Blogging

Also in Opinior

- [Blogginghear](#)
- [Blogginghear](#)
- [Watch more](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Complete cover:
season

All the news tha

In a world of sec
facts first.



“It’s definitely a shift in political priorities and strategy,” he said.

Recollections by gay Republicans whom Mr. Romney courted and worked with during his campaign for governor, and in his unsuccessful run for the Senate in 1994, produce a portrait of a man they genuinely saw as their partner in their fight for broader acceptance.

After the breakfast meeting in 2002, where the Log Cabin board unanimously decided to endorse him, he said in an interview with Bay Windows, a gay newspaper, that he would use his bully pulpit as governor to lobby legislators for domestic partnership benefits.

“Those kinds of things I think I can generate a great deal of public support for,” he said, “and therefore create pressure for legislators that otherwise might not think in those terms.”

And, in the aftermath of the Massachusetts court decision, Mr. Romney, though aligning himself with the supporters of a constitutional amendment, did order town clerks to begin issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Some members of Log Cabin Republicans say that in doing so, he ultimately fulfilled his promise to them despite his own moral objections.

But far more express a sense of outrage at what they deem a betrayal in his current positioning.

“I didn’t see him necessarily carrying the flag with missionary zeal” for gay rights back in 2002, said Richard Babson, a Log Cabin member who was at the breakfast meeting. “But I also didn’t see him carrying the flag with missionary zeal for the other side.”

Mr. Romney’s eldest son, Tagg, 37, says that back in the early 1990s, he told his father privately that he was thinking about becoming a Democrat.

His father sat him down to dissuade him, taking him through the differences between Republicans and Democrats. Tagg Romney says he does not remember his father’s talking about abortion, another issue that has troubled his candidacy, but he does remember being warned that Democrats would lead the country toward same-sex marriage.

“He thought it was very wrong to discriminate,” Tagg Romney said. “But where Democrats are going, they’ll eventually want to extend marriage to gays. I said, ‘No way.’ ”

Even as early as 1994, when Mr. Romney challenged [Edward M. Kennedy](#) for a Senate seat, there were some Log Cabin members who harbored reservations about him. The Boston Globe published an article quoting several people who said Mr. Romney had delivered an address at a Mormon gathering that year in which he called homosexuality “perverse.”

For all of that, some activists were optimistic about him. Log Cabin members had been very supportive of [William F. Weld](#), the Republican incumbent as governor, who was

fiscally conservative but moderate on social issues. Many members of the club believed Mr. Romney would be similar, especially after meeting with him.

“He couldn’t have been more kind and interested in understanding gay rights,” said Rich Tafel, who was executive director of Log Cabin’s national organization at the time. “He struck me as a business person who just wanted to understand this issue, and he wanted to communicate that he wasn’t antigay at all.”

Leaders of the group worked with Mr. Romney’s Senate campaign to draft a letter, which he eventually released, about his commitment to gay rights. He declared that he would go beyond Mr. Kennedy’s considerable record on the issue. He pledged his support for federal legislation that barred discrimination against gay men and lesbians in employment, and praised President [Bill Clinton](#)’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy for the military as a first step toward “gays and lesbians being able to serve openly and honestly.”

“If we are to achieve the goals we share, we must make equality for gays and lesbians a mainstream concern,” he wrote. “My opponent cannot do this. I can, and will.”

[More Articles in National »](#)

[Need to know more? 50% off home delivery of The Times.](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

["Barack Obama Exposed"](#)

A Free special report on the real Barack Obama - get your copy today!
www.HumanEvents.com

[Hillary Campaign Website](#)

Help Make History! Paid for by Hillary Clinton for President.
www.HillaryClinton.com

[Hydrogen + Gas Car Kit](#)

Learn To Convert Your Car To Burn Hydrogen & Gas To Double Mileage!
www.RunYourCarWithWater.com

Tips

To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

Past Coverage

- [THE NATION; All Crime Is Local in '08 Politics](#) (September 16, 2007)
- [G.O.P. Spat Over Web Site](#) (September 12, 2007)
- [Romney's Tone On Gay Rights Is Seen as Shift](#) (September 8, 2007)
- [Rank and File's '08 Outlook? It Seemingly Varies by Party](#) (September 4, 2007)

Related Searches

- [Presidential Election of 2008](#)
- [Romney, Mitt](#)
- [Homosexuality](#)
- [Marriages](#)

THEATER »



**Dramatic Power Couple:
Theater Is Their Castle**

OPINION »

City Life: A Day at the Opera, a Snack for the Soul

Popcorn and soda bring
a whiff of a first
encounter with opera.

U.S. »



**Silence Replaces Bids and
Moos at Stockyards**

WORLD »



**In Cairo, You Can't Hear
Yourself Scream**

MEDIA & ARTS

He Wrote 200,000 Books Comp Did So the W

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#)

[Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#)