



Station 3 - San Francisco in 2004

As a group, analyze the below document. Then, answer the questions at the end of the handout.

The New York Times |

ARCHIVES | 2004

San Francisco City Officials Perform Gay Marriages

By **DAVID STOUT** FEB. 12, 2004

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12 — City officials in San Francisco, a community that has long prided itself on tolerance, began performing marriages today between couples of the same sex in a coordinated political and legal challenge to state law.

By early this afternoon, at least eight such marriages had been performed, and a dozen more marriage licenses had been issued to same-sex couples. The mayor's office said that, starting today, the city will issue marriage licenses to any gay couples who apply.

The ceremonies in San Francisco, while not surprising, were nonetheless noteworthy. They mean that, more starkly than ever, the very meaning of "marriage" is now being fiercely debated in two states on opposite coasts, and that the issue will almost surely remain a bitter one throughout the election campaign, since some of President Bush's supporters have been pushing him to call for an amendment to the United States Constitution that would limit "marriage" to heterosexual unions.

In Massachusetts, the state's highest court has upheld the constitutionality of marriage between couples of the same sex. Because of the ruling, a constitutional convention is about to be held, with some lawmakers pushing for an amendment to the state constitution that would define marriage as a heterosexual institution but allow same-sex couples to join in civil unions.

In San Francisco today, the first ceremony was for Phyllis Lyon, 79, and Del Martin, 83, women who have been together for a half-century. The ceremony took place in the office of City Assessor Mabel Teng, a spokesman for Mayor Gavin



Newsom told The Associated Press.

The mayor and his top aides helped to schedule today's ceremonies quickly so as to have them take place before the group Campaign for California Families could obtain an injunction to block the city from issuing marriage licenses to gays.

Mayor Newsom, a Democratic businessman who was elected last fall, had signaled his intention in advance. "A little more than a month ago, I took the oath of office here at City Hall and swore to uphold California's Constitution, which clearly outlaws all forms of discrimination," he said on Tuesday as he asked the San Francisco County Clerk to begin issuing marriage licenses "on a non-discriminatory basis."

"California's Constitution is clear," the mayor said. "Discrimination is immoral, it is illegal and it is antithetical to our most cherished values liberty and freedom."

Mr. Newsom said denying gays and lesbians the right to marry "denies them more than a marriage license; it precludes millions of couples from obtaining health benefits, hospital visitation rights and pension privileges."

"There is no rationale for discrimination against any individuals in California," said Mr. Newsom, who is 36. His wife, Kimberly, is a former San Francisco prosecutor.

The group that hoped to head off the issuance of licenses, Campaign for California Families, describes itself as believing in "the innate worth of all individuals" but said it does not condone "behavior choices that are detrimental to society, family or morality."

The group said today it was going ahead with its lawsuit.

In 2000, California voters approved a ballot measure defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The State Legislature later approved a domestic partner law that will offer generous protections to gays when it takes effect next year.

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Questions

1. Where in the United States did this take place? When?
2. What level of government was involved (city, state, federal)?
3. What branch of government was involved (legislative, executive, judicial)?
4. Were any particular government leaders involved?
5. In what capacity were those leaders involved?
6. What is a brief explanation of what occurred during this event?
7. What was the result of this event?
8. How did the event affect the civic process and history of the Marriage Equality debate?