



Mitt Romney: The Real Truth

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No American governor has faced more critical cultural issues than Mitt Romney, Massachusetts' chief executive from 2003 to 2007. In the midst of Governor Romney's efforts to rescue his state from a fiscal crisis and create lasting and innovative health care solutions, activist judges and a far-left legislature forced issues of same-sex "marriage," abortion, religious liberty, stem cell research, and gay rights into the forefront. Each time he was challenged, the Governor not only made the conservative choice, but also did so with an optimistic, unifying message. In doing so, he became a national leader on these vital cultural issues without squandering his ability to govern the Commonwealth.

In four years, Governor Romney turned a deficit into a surplus without raising taxes, created a health coverage plan that is applauded by experts on both sides of the aisle and is designed to reduce costs while preserving personal choices, and effectively responded to the deadly collapse of one of the most expensive construction projects in American history. He did all these things in one of America's most liberal states at the same time that he vetoed expansive stem cell legislation, vetoed the expansion of abortion rights in Massachusetts, defended the religious liberties of Catholic Charities from an assault by homosexual activists, and launched a multi-year (and multi-state) campaign to preserve traditional marriage after Massachusetts' Supreme Judicial Court's decision to legalize same-sex marriage.

In spite of this impressive conservative record, a group called "MassResistance" has been circulating a lengthy document called "The Mitt Romney Deception." Combining old statements, half-truths, and some completely misrepresented stories, the document has gained some traction in the conservative community, with anti-Romney activists forwarding the document dozens of times (apparently without any independent verification of its facts). In much the way as urban legends gain traction through

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repeated e-mail “forwards,” the seriously-flawed MassResistance piece has led a few individuals to question the Governor’s commitment to conservative principles. MassResistance’s document, however, suffers from at least five fundamental errors.

These errors are:

1. MassResistance fails to account for the Governor’s very real move to the pro-life side of the abortion debate;
2. MassResistance indulges in an illogical reading of the *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* same-sex marriage decision and thereby completely mischaracterizes the Governor’s response to the Massachusetts same-sex marriage crisis;
3. MassResistance fails to account for the Governor’s very real defense of religious liberty over the entitlement mentality of homosexual activists;
4. MassResistance falsely claims Governor Romney excluded the Boy Scouts from volunteering during the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics; and
5. MassResistance indulges in leftist-style identity politics by urging that Governor Romney (or any other Republican) participate in a search-and-destroy operation against any government-employed homosexuals.

The centerpiece of the MassResistance presentation is a series of quotes—taken primarily from Governor Romney’s 1994 Senate campaign against Ted Kennedy—and then the implication that these quotes (regarding abortion and “gay rights”) are indicative of his current political positions and his actions in office. Nothing could be further from the truth. A lot has happened since 1994, and as a result, the Governor has become firmly pro-life, opposes adding sexual orientation to federal employment nondiscrimination laws, and has been one of the nation’s foremost advocates for traditional marriage. To consider just a few events that led the Governor to change his mind: Nondiscrimination laws have been used to dramatically restrict fundamental First Amendment freedoms—including the ability of Christian student groups to meet on campus and religious adoption agencies to place disabled children with appropriate families; an activist state supreme court unilaterally redefined marriage; and the growth of embryonic stem cell research has led to the commodification of human life. Faced with these realities, the Governor has consistently made the right choices. MassResistance ignores these choices.

The following represents the real truth about Mitt Romney.

ABORTION

Mitt Romney is pro-life, and his actions in office were consistently pro-life. MassResistance is correct when it notes that Governor Romney made many statements in 1994 that were supportive of abortion rights, but the Governor, by his own admission,

was wrong when he made those comments. In the December 14, 2006, edition of *National Review Online*, Governor Romney said the following to *NRO* editor Kathryn Jean Lopez:

I believe people will see that as governor, when I had to examine and grapple with this difficult issue, I came down on the side of life. I know in the four years I have served as governor I have learned and grown from the exposure to the thousands of good-hearted people who are working to change the culture in our country. I'm committed to promoting the culture of life. Like Ronald Reagan, and Henry Hyde, and others who became pro-life, I had this issue wrong in the past.

The Governor is correct that his *actual record* as governor is solidly pro-life. Governor Romney vetoed a bill that would have provided access to the so-called “morning after pill,” a “medication” that terminates living children after their conception. Moreover, the Governor vetoed expansive stem cell legislation—legislation that provided for the creation and destruction of human embryos at the whim of a researcher. In fact, it was this very debate that led to the Governor’s conversion on the life issue. As he told *NRO*’s Lopez:

My position has changed and I have acknowledged that. How that came about is that several years ago, in the course of the stem-cell-research debate I met with a pair of experts from Harvard. At one point the experts pointed out that embryonic-stem-cell research should not be a moral issue because the embryos were destroyed at 14 days. After the meeting I looked over at Beth Myers, my chief of staff, and we both had exactly the same reaction—it just hit us hard just how much the sanctity of life had been cheapened by virtue of the *Roe v. Wade* mentality.

As advocates for life, social conservatives should welcome changes like this, and we must recognize that some of the best advocates for life can be those—like Ronald Reagan and Henry Hyde—who were wrong in the past. MassResistance does its readers no service by placing more emphasis on quotes more than a decade old than it does on the Governor’s actual record in office.

SAME-SEX “MARRIAGE”

From the moment the activist judges in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court handed down their breathtakingly arrogant decision in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, the Governor took strong and consistent actions to defend marriage. He also took decisive action to make sure his state would not grant marriage licenses to out-of-state couples, thereby guaranteeing that Massachusetts would not become the “Las Vegas of gay marriage” (as he called it) and trigger a constitutional crisis as couples returned to their home states with Massachusetts licenses. He also initiated and led an effort to amend the Massachusetts constitution by referendum and has gone so far as to file suit against the Commonwealth’s own legislature after it took action to prevent the people of Massachusetts from voting on that amendment—a suit that resulted in the

legislature complying with its constitutional responsibilities and sending the marriage amendment on to the next stage of the ratification process.

Critically, he has become a leading national advocate for marriage, with his optimistic and uplifting message dominating the public debate. Rather than casting the debate as one over adult rights, the Governor has made the best possible case for marriage, noting what we all should know but too often forget (at great cultural cost): Marriage does not exist for the convenience and enjoyment of adults, but as the best possible way of raising and nurturing children. The credible defenders of marriage in Massachusetts all agree, and through their own statement they have recently and emphatically made their feelings clear: Mitt Romney has been an invaluable supporter and advocate.

Yet despite this record, MassResistance claims that Mitt Romney actually enabled gay marriage by not defying the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts—in other words, by not breaking the law. In a truly baffling bit of legal reasoning, MassResistance argues that the court ruling “simply advised the Legislature to pass legislation codifying its opinion on changing the marriage statutes” and that Governor Romney was therefore “not bound to enforce same-sex marriage prior to legislative action.”

This is simply an incorrect reading of the decision. Here is what the Supreme Judicial Court actually said: “We construe civil marriage to mean the voluntary union of two persons as spouses, to the exclusion of all others.” In other words, the court itself changed the definition of marriage. The reference to legislative action in the opinion merely gave the legislature a chance to amend the law to state what the court already said it meant. This was not advising the legislature; it was changing the law. Any governor who defied this decision risked contempt of court. Rather than becoming what the media would undoubtedly call the “George Wallace of gay marriage” by standing in the courthouse door and barring couples from receiving marriage licenses, the Governor chose legal means to resist the court’s decision.

And his decision was correct. It is now clear that the *Goodridge* decision represented not the beginning of the end of traditional marriage but what may well be the high-water mark of the same-sex marriage movement. Since that decision, homosexual marriage activists have been on the defensive virtually everywhere, losing referenda and losing court decisions. Had Governor Romney not offered a principled and effective defense of marriage, the outcome may very well have been quite different.

“GAY RIGHTS”

The Governor believes all people should be treated equally in the eyes of the law, but that no additional legal protections for sexual orientation should be added. Since his race against Ted Kennedy in 1994, sexual orientation nondiscrimination laws have become commonplace across the country, and it is easy to see and understand their effects. Since 1994, these laws have been used as pretexts for ejecting Christian student groups from college campuses, for closing religious-based adoptive services, for silencing people of faith as they seek to debate issues of sexual morality, and for

transforming marriage laws (see the New Jersey Supreme Court's recent decision). The Governor stated his position well on *NRO*:

Lopez: And what about the 1994 letter to the Log Cabin Republicans where you indicated you would support the Federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and seemed open to changing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy in the military? Are those your positions today?

Gov. Romney: No. I don't see the need for new or special legislation. My experience over the past several years as governor has convinced me that ENDA would be an overly broad law that would open a litigation floodgate and unfairly penalize employers at the hands of activist judges.

As for military policy and the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, I trust the counsel of those in uniform who have set these policies over a dozen years ago. I agree with President Bush's decision to maintain this policy and I would do the same.

The Governor's words are supported by solid and convincing actions. In 2006, he strongly defended the right of Catholic Charities to refuse to place adoptive children in homes with homosexual couples. In taking this stand, he opposed virtually the entire Massachusetts political establishment, but he was defending the fundamental freedom of people of faith to live out their values. Once again, Governor Romney made the right choice.

THE BOY SCOUTS

The Governor has long been a strong supporter of the Boy Scouts, even sitting on its national board of directors. He has never taken any action to limit their activities. Any statement to the contrary is false. Particularly hurtful has been MassResistance's claim that Governor Romney prevented the Boy Scouts from serving in the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics because of their stand on homosexual scoutmasters. Leading conservative attorney Jay Sekulow has thoroughly and completely debunked this claim:

Brian Camenker's [of MassResistance] claim...that "Romney Barred Boy Scouts from public participation in the 2002 Olympics" is entirely false. There are several articles that directly contradict Camenker's conclusion. NewsMax.com, Camenker's source, did not even claim that Romney made the decision to bar the Scouts. In fact, Romney, at least at that time, sat on the Boy Scout's executive board. The Boy Scouts said that the NewsMax article was false. Even NewsMax admitted that the Olympic Committee said that there was an age restriction of 18 years old and up to be a volunteer. There are also inconsistencies in the two NewsMax articles, only one of which is cited by Camenker....Since no major media source ran anything about this story, and the local media directly contradicted it, it appears that Camenker's claim is false.

LEFTIST IDENTITY POLITICS

Mitt Romney does not play the game of leftist identity politics—which means he hires people on the basis of their abilities and qualifications, not on the basis of their identity. As a result, he has hired some well-qualified homosexual individuals to several positions in his administration. These people were hired because they were good at their jobs (and in the case of judges, tough on crime and faithful to the law as written), not because they identify as “gay.” It is the left that all too often hires and fires, includes and excludes on the basis of identity (for example, witness the profound disadvantages faced by whites and Asians in the college admissions process created by misguided racial quotas). Conservatives believe in hiring and firing on the basis of ability and qualifications.

MassResistance would lead conservatives to believe they should adopt leftist goals and tactics by excluding any self-described gay person from government—on the basis of self-described identity alone. Such a “search and destroy” effort is not only absurd and impractical, it is also immoral—and unsupported by any leading national conservative. Ironically, it is the very tactic of excluding on the basis of sexual orientation that would make the outcry for including sexual orientation in federal nondiscrimination laws irresistible.

Finally, MassResistance spends pages describing in lurid details the actions of low-level bureaucrats within the Romney administration (for example, citing support for certain “gay pride” parades and events by state education officials). Yet MassResistance fails to explain how the Governor condoned or even knew about these efforts. While a chief executive is responsible for the actions of its administration, in the real world, the chief executive of any state (much less a state with an entrenched liberal bureaucracy like Massachusetts) cannot and should not waste his time, effort, and limited political capital cleansing the expression and actions of minor state officials. Changes in bureaucracies occur only after time and only with legislative cooperation—two instruments the Governor did not have.

CONCLUSION

MassResistance would have conservatives believe that Mitt Romney’s words from twelve years ago are more relevant than his actions as Governor of Massachusetts. For the first time in many years, conservatives have a presidential candidate who not only shares their core political and moral values but can also communicate those values in a persuasive, compelling, and—yes—unifying way. We should not permit distortions, leftist-style scare tactics, and identity politics to obscure the truth about Mitt Romney—a man of principle who is and will be the best conservative standard-bearer in 2008.