

December 7, 2006

Cheney Pregnancy Stirs Debate on Gay Rights

By [JIM RUTENBERG](#)

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6 — Mary Cheney, a daughter of Vice President [Dick Cheney](#), is expecting a baby with her partner of 15 years, Heather Poe, Mr. Cheney's office said Wednesday.

Lea Anne McBride, a spokeswoman for Mr. Cheney, said the vice president and his wife, [Lynne Cheney](#), were "looking forward with eager anticipation" to the baby's birth, which is expected this spring and will bring to six the number of grandchildren the Cheneys have.

Mr. Cheney's office would not provide details about how Mary Cheney became pregnant or by whom, and Ms. Cheney did not respond to messages left at her office and with her book publisher, Simon & Schuster.

The announcement of the pregnancy, which was first reported Wednesday by The Washington Post, and Ms. Cheney's future status as a same-sex parent, prompted new debate over the administration's opposition to gay marriage.

Family Pride, a gay rights group, noted that Ms. Cheney's home state, Virginia, does not recognize same-sex civil unions or marriages.

"The news of Mary Cheney's pregnancy exemplifies, once again, how the best interests of children are denied when lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender citizens are treated unfairly and accorded different and unequal rights and responsibilities than other parents," said the group's executive director, Jennifer Chrisler.

Focus on the Family, a Christian group that has provided crucial political support to President Bush, released a statement that criticized child rearing by same-sex couples.

"Mary Cheney's pregnancy raises the question of what's best for children," said Carrie Gordon Earll, the group's director of issues analysis. "Just because it's possible to conceive a child outside of the relationship of a married mother and father doesn't mean it's the best for the child."

In 2004, Ms. Cheney worked on the Bush-Cheney re-election campaign, which won in part because of the so-called values voters who were drawn to the polls by ballot measures seeking to ban same-sex marriage.

Mr. Bush voiced strong approval that year for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, as he did this year, too. While gay rights groups called on Ms. Cheney to speak out against the proposed ban in 2004, she remained silent.

But Ms. Cheney wrote in a book published this year that she had considered resigning from the campaign after learning that Mr. Bush would endorse the proposed amendment. She said that she decided to stay because other important issues were at stake in the 2004 campaign.

As she promoted her book last spring, she said a federal ban on same-sex marriage would "write discrimination into the Constitution." The vice president has hinted at disapproval of the proposed amendment. Asked where he stood on the issue during a campaign stop in Iowa in 2004, Mr. Cheney said, "Freedom means freedom for everyone."

Dana Perino, a spokeswoman for Mr. Bush, said that Mr. Cheney had recently told the president about the pregnancy and

that “the president said he was happy for him.” The Cheneys have five grandchildren by their other daughter, Elizabeth.

Mary Cheney, 37, is a vice president at AOL; Ms. Poe, a former park ranger, is 45.

[Copyright 2006 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)
