

# Conservatives Block 'Domestic Partners' Law

By Arthur J. Brew

**San Francisco** — A small group of Catholics and Protestant conservatives has temporarily blocked a San Francisco board of supervisors law which would have given legal status to homosexual couples and heterosexual "live-in lovers."

The measure which was adopted by the supervisors' 11-0 vote in late May was to have taken effect in early July. For only a \$35 registration fee at City hall, they would be eligible for hospital visitation rights, bereavement leave, and eventually health benefits, social security benefits, the right to file joint tax returns, adoption rights, and other privileges now given to married couples only.

By quietly gathering more than 27,000 signatures calling for its repeal, the informal coalition of conservatives has forced suspension of the law. The measure will go

on the November ballot if the city determines that at least 18,800 of the signatures are valid.

### Liberals Stunned

The successful petition drive carried out in front of many of the local churches has stunned San Francisco's powerful liberal political and media establishment which has been congratulating itself all spring on this major advance on behalf of unmarried lovers who are seeking all the rights and benefits of the marital state. Archbishop John R. Quinn was almost the only leading religious figure to take a public stand against the proposal.

In a May letter to mayor Art Agnos, Archbishop Quinn wrote, "The legislation passed unanimously by the Board of Supervisors is a serious blow to our society's historic commitment to supporting marriage and family life and equates domestic

partnerships with marriage. Such legislation...imperils the deepest values of our common, public moral heritage and damages the fundamental well-being of society...Injury to individual rights should be redressed by means other than the radical repudiation of fundamental values and institutions which have profound significance for a present and future viable and well-ordered society.

"To me," Archbishop Quinn continued, "it is astonishing in the extreme that not one voice on the Board of Supervisors was raised against this legislation and that there is such a colossal failure to see the profound attack on marriage and the family which it embodies."

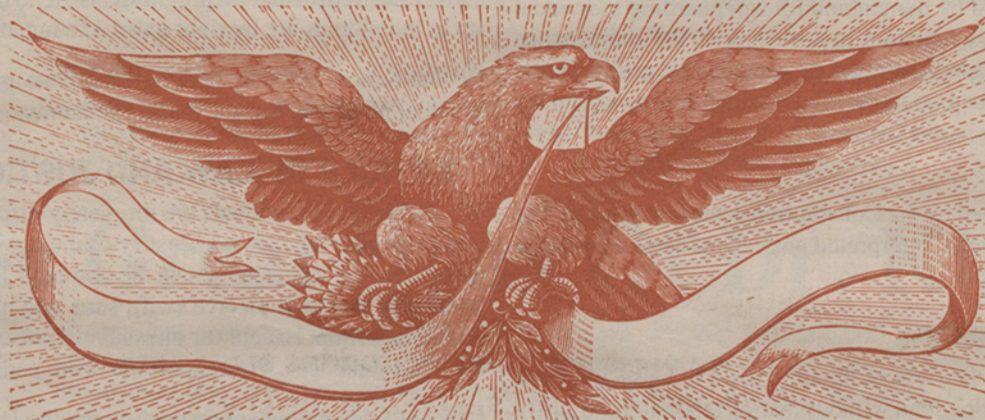
### Pro-Life Support

Informed sources believe that the petition had the full backing of the city's pro-life leaders, plus Eagle Forum of San

Francisco, and this, added to Church support, made the collection of signatures relatively easy. But defeating the measure in November may be another story in an area where Dukakis ran far ahead of Reagan and the homosexual community numbers about 100,000.

The Rev. Charles McIlhenny of the First Orthodox Presbyterian Church, a small congregation in the city's Sunset District, and Rabbi Lionel Feldman, were two of the leaders in the battle against the domestic partners law. McIlhenny's church operates a small crisis pregnancy center in its basement. The conservative denomination broke off from the more liberal Presbyterian mainstream in 1983 and has about 18,000 members nationwide. ■

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