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Mayor Newsom Discusses Ethics In Local Politics

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom kicked off a five-part lecture series Sept. 5 by speaking about his approach to making ethical decisions, a method that centers on action and leading by example.

"We have an obligation, an ethical obligation, not to talk about problems, but to do something about them," Newsom told a capacity crowd at the University of San Francisco's McLaren Complex.

The series features the five most recent mayors of The City, with each addressing the challenges of making critical ethical decisions while in public office. The series is sponsored by the Office of the President, the Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good, and the American Institute for Ethics.

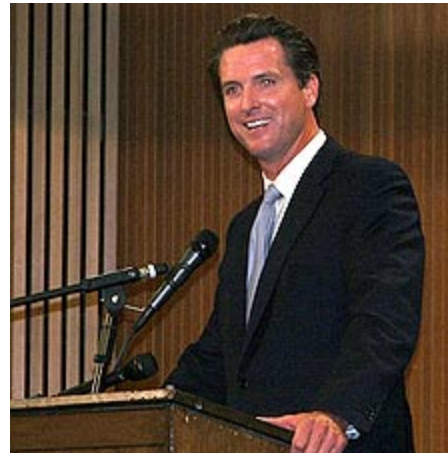
In introducing the series, USF President Stephen A. Privett, S.J. told of other universities scrambling to include ethics in their curriculae in the wake of scandals such as those at Enron and WorldCom. USF, however, already had a long history of incorporating ethics into student education as part of its core mission.

Newsom and his administration, Fr. Privett said, are following the university's mission of creating a more humane and just world.

Throughout his talk, Newsom highlighted ways in which San Francisco has taken the lead in order to work toward this ideal. The City, for example, offers universal health insurance for children, and is in the process of providing universal healthcare access to all residents. San Francisco also requires employers to pay a minimum wage of \$8.82 per hour, higher than California's minimum wage, which is already the highest statewide minimum wage in the nation.

Newsom also mentioned The City's plan to pay for reinstating nurses in public schools as well as funding music and art programs for all students.

Newsom emphasized that he was mentioning those actions not to impress audience members, but to impress upon them the moral responsibility we all have to address issues rather than simply complain about them.



Mayor Gavin Newsom talks to a capacity crowd as the first speaker in a five-part lecture series.

His definition of ethics, Newsom said, includes honesty, integrity, and using one's values for action even when not everyone agrees with that action.

As an example, Newsom pointed to his decision to allow gay couples to marry in San Francisco in 2004. He discussed his reasoning for the action - "If we value equality, then we value it for everyone" - and said that he remains steadfast in his support of marriage equality. Despite the political fallout from his actions including disapproval from fellow Democrats, Newsom said he does not regret the decision to follow his moral compass.

"Not everyone would agree we did the right thing, but for me, we did the ethical and moral thing," Newsom said.

Other speakers in the lecture series include:

Mayor Frank Jordan, September 28, McLaren Complex, 7:30 pm.
Mayor Willie Brown, October 19, McLaren Complex, 7:30 pm.
Mayor Art Agnos, November 2, Lone Mountain Room 100, 7:30 pm.
Senator Dianne Feinstein, spring 2007, TBA.

For more information, contact the Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good, at (415) 422-5662, or the Office of Institutional Research, at (415) 422-2846. ■

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