

# Movement afoot to erase constitutional ban on foreign-born presidents

By DONNA CASSATA  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The nation's forefathers envisioned a president born in the good ol' U.S. of A.; a red, white and true-blue chief executive for when the band strikes up "Hail to the Chief." In 1787, they put it in writing — Article 2, Section 1 of the Constitution: "No person except a natural born citizen ... shall be eligible to the office of president."

More than 200 years later, in a diverse nation with more than 33 million immigrants, the push is on to alter that venerable document and allow naturalized U.S. citizens — Americans like Arnold Schwarzenegger from Thal, Austria, and Jennifer Granholm from Vancouver, B.C., — to become president.

The number of foreign-born in the United States is increasing at a rapid pace: more than 1 million a year between 2000 and 2004, according to a recent study. Those millions, however, aren't the ones some proponents of the constitutional change have in mind.

Think California Gov. Schwarzenegger. Perhaps Michigan Gov. Granholm.

A Web site, Amendforarnold.com, promotes the effort with photos of the Austrian-born Schwarzenegger and a mention of the Canadian-born Granholm — "Amend for Arnold and Jen," it proclaims. The same people who are sponsoring the Web site have bought ads on California television, hoping to create a groundswell of support.

Several measures have been introduced in Congress, including a joint resolution by Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., and Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, which proposes a constitutional amendment that would extend eligibility for the presidency to immigrants who have held U.S. citizenship for at least 20 years.

Schwarzenegger became a citizen in 1983, Granholm in 1980.

Prohibiting foreign-born Americans from occupying the White House is "hard to justify in a nation where there are so many people who have become naturalized citizens," said Mark V. Tushnet, a professor of constitutional

law at the Georgetown University Law Center.

Among those who think it won't happen is Schwarzenegger's wife, Maria Shriver.

"Forget about it," California's first lady says in an article in the January edition of Vanity Fair, which is scheduled to hit newsstands today. "It is not going to happen. The process takes years, and this is as far as it goes."

She said there "absolutely" should be an amendment that would allow naturalized citizens to run for president. Madeleine Albright, the former secretary of State who was born in Czechoslovakia, recently backed amending the Constitution. "We are a country of immigrants," she said. "I think that it would be not a bad thing to try to figure out how to allow foreign-born people to become president."

The odds are against proponents of the change, which would require two-thirds majority votes in the House and Senate, then approval by three-fourths of the states.

Part of the problem, according to

proponents, is a post-Sept. 11, 2001, climate in which many Americans are wary of immigrants, even legal ones, and want to tighten immigration laws.

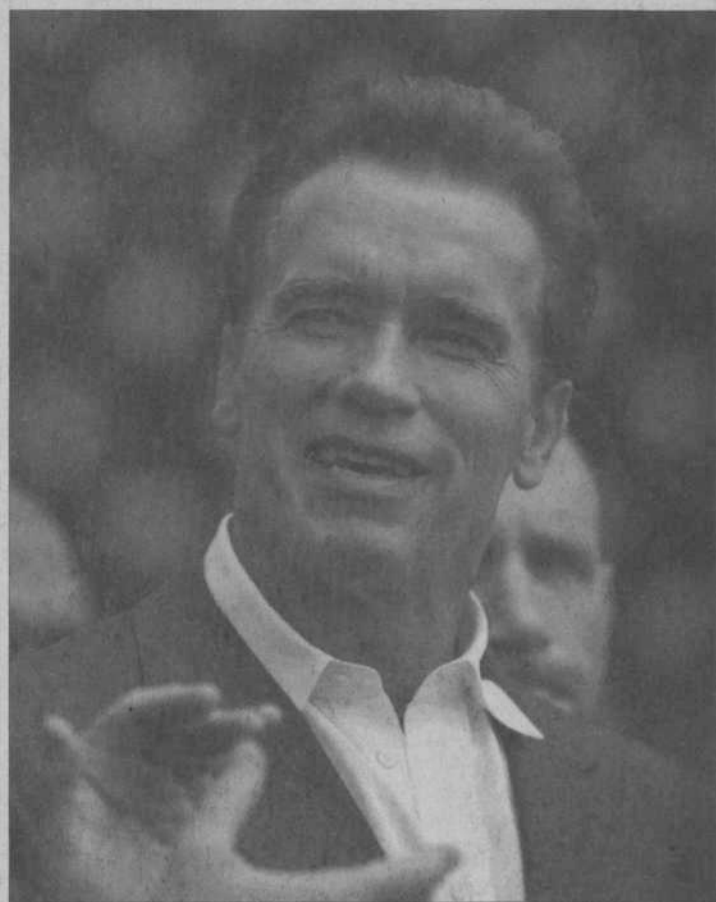
A recent CNN-USA Today-Gallup poll found that 67 percent opposed changing the Constitution to allow immigrants to be president. When half the poll sample was asked the same question with Schwarzenegger's name, opposition dropped slightly to 58 percent.

Proponents also must contend with the political impression that the nascent movement is being mounted for one Republican.

"Democrats may be nervous putting in place a constitutional amendment that might have the immediate impact of promoting Governor Schwarzenegger's candidacy," Tushnet said.

Also, Democrats, who saw President Bush increase his support among Hispanics in the 2004 election, might be loath to fight anything that boosts opportunities for immigrants.

Tushnet said any Democratic reticence about Schwarzenegger could



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be dealt with by deferring the effective date of the change to 2012, similar to what Congress and the states did in 1951 when they ratified the 22nd Amendment but exempted President Truman from the limit of two terms.

A deferred date, however, could cost the effort Republican support, especially among those in the GOP who dream of bodybuilder-actor-politician Schwarzenegger as commander in chief.

# Global lectures, teaching possible for Edwards

By STEVE HARTSOE  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENSBORO, N.C. — He hasn't said it outright, but John Edwards sounds every bit a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

"I'm not through fighting," Edwards told about 140 supporters Tuesday at the Greensboro Historical Museum.

But his pledge to improve health care, jobs and national security won't be

done as an elected official.

With the presidential campaign over and his term in the U.S. Senate ending in January, Edwards said he will pursue new avenues to keep his populist message in the spotlight.

That could include working with policy groups, foundations, speaking around the world or teaching at universities, he said.

"There are a lot of ways to make a difference," Edwards said, adding that he won't return to his previous career as

a litigator.

His priority for now is taking care of his wife Elizabeth, who is being treated for breast cancer, he said.

Edwards, on the second day of his three-day "Thank You Tar Heels Tour" of the state, was confident he could play a relevant role in the future of the country and his party.

He said he was disappointed at losing his home state to President Bush on Nov. 2.

Edwards added that Democrats can

do a better job of convincing voters in Bush-supporting red states that his party shares their values of religious faith and hard work.

"I think it got across to some people, but that doesn't mean we can't do better," he told reporters.

Edwards, who chose not to seek a second six-year term in the Senate to pursue a presidential bid, has been criticized for missing Senate votes to campaign.

He defended his absence, saying he

believed North Carolina benefited from representation on a national ticket.


Edwards listed his key achievements in the Senate as co-sponsoring a patient's bill of rights and securing aid to storm victims and laid-off workers.

Laurie Gengenbach of Greensboro said she won't support a 2008 presidential run by Edwards because he and Kerry didn't challenge election results she called fraudulent.

"He's just completely silent," she said. "It needs to be looked at."



CHUCK BURTON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
John Edwards, right, speaks in Charlotte on Monday.



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