

**SFGate**.com

[www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com)

[Return](#)

[to regular view](#)

## **Thousands protest at governor's benefit** **Raucous S.F. rally at his fund-raiser for ballot measures**

- [John Wildermuth](#), [Carla Marinucci](#), [Joe Garofoli](#), [Chronicle Political Writers](#)

Wednesday, April 6, 2005



Noisy demonstrators armed with signs and outrage once again greeted Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger -- this time at San Francisco's Ritz-Carlton Hotel -- at a Tuesday evening fund-raiser expected to raise more than \$100, 000 for his proposed ballot measures.

Neophyte protesters mixed with veteran activists. Tourists on cable cars waved and snapped pictures, motorists honked, and the music ranged from "Born in the U.S.A." to "I Left My Heart in San Francisco."

But the primarily peaceful protest, which grew to a few thousand boisterous demonstrators, turned ugly for about 30 minutes when the sign- waving crowd broke through police lines around the posh hotel and shut down a block of Pine Street. Protesters shouted taunts of "Corporate pig" and "Shame on you" at Schwarzenegger supporters trying to go inside for the fund-raiser, and at least one demonstrator was arrested for appearing to threaten a hotel guest.

Despite drawing fewer than the 5,000 to 10,000 demonstrators predicted by organizers, Tuesday's raucous rally was a rerun of the protests that have dogged the governor in recent months, as teachers, nurses and union members, angry at Schwarzenegger's attempts to trim California's budget, have vented their anger at his public events.

"We've followed him to Washington, Ohio, New York and every part of the state," said Rose Ann DeMoro, executive director of the California Nurses Association.

The continuous conflict has taken its toll on a governor who prides himself on his ability to connect with voters. Schwarzenegger avoids the protesters entirely, driving directly into an underground garage for a fund- raiser in San Jose last month and arriving at the Ritz-Carlton at about 3 p.m. Tuesday, hours before the demonstrations began.

Schwarzenegger's backers brushed away suggestions the protests were bothering the governor or hurting his popularity.

Rob Stutzman, the governor's spokesman, told reporters Tuesday at a Sacramento briefing that those complaining about the governor's agenda were little more than paid shells.

"It's obvious when you go to San Francisco, you're going to get large protests when you're doing something controversial," he said. "So we're not at all surprised that there will be a large turnout tonight of protesters, many of which are paid union protesters punching the clock."

Union organizers denied that workers were paid to attend the protest, and Stutzman declined to offer any evidence of payments from the unions.

In an interview with The Chronicle, Stutzman complained the protesters represented special interest groups eager to hold on to budget-busting agreements they made with former Gov. Gray Davis and the Democrat-controlled Legislature.

"In order to reform the state, you bet there has to be a rollback of the sweetheart deals they accumulated," Stutzman said.

The special interest label Schwarzenegger has pinned on his opponents has infuriated nurses, teachers and other public employees.

"It's a sign of (Schwarzenegger's) autocratic nature," said DeMoro of the nurses' union. "Everyone who has a contrary opinion is suddenly a special interest."

The crowd at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel showed the governor had miscalculated, she added.

"He's going after people like teachers, nurses, police and firefighters, people who have deep roots in their local communities," DeMoro said. "We didn't even do a mailing to get people here. We just talked to our members and had them call their families and friends."

Inside the hotel, about 100 people paid \$1,000 each to attend the invitation-only fund-raiser sponsored by Citizens to Save California, with some contributing thousands more for pictures and a pre-dinner reception with the governor.

The group has pledged to raise \$13 million to put a number of Schwarzenegger-backed initiatives on the ballot, including measures to limit pensions for public employees, require merit pay for teachers, make it easier to trim state spending and change the way political boundaries are drawn.

While denying the protests are hurting fund-raising, they don't make it easy for the people attending the dinners, said Joel Fox, a former aide to Schwarzenegger who is one of the leaders of Citizens to Save California.

"If you listen to (protesters) screaming, obviously part of their goal is to intimidate people," he said.

Protester Juanita Yee, 40, of Brisbane, denounced the governor for failing to support public education in the ways he had promised.

"I can't afford private school," said Yee, who has four kids. "It's not an option with a stay-at-home mom and a father who's a union plumber."

Santa Clara fire Capt. Bill Stone had never attended a protest before but was spurred to do so Tuesday by proposed benefit cuts for public safety employees.

"Firefighters will step up when it's an issue that affects people like teachers," said Stone, who arrived with seven other firefighters from Local 1171 in Santa Clara.

The crowd was largely middle-age, equipped with signs such as "Grope-n-ator, keep your hands off our retirement" and "Nurses heal, Arnold wheels and deals."

John Bilicska, 46, an unemployed North Beach resident who used to work at UC Irvine, said, "The governor's calling the people who do the work the special interests, while the businesses that are shipping our jobs overseas are just great. I don't trust him. He's a typical Republican politician."

Schwarzenegger has headlined fund-raisers for Citizens to Save California in Sacramento, Los Angeles, Irvine and San Jose, with one scheduled for San Diego later this month. The efforts have raised millions for the initiative drive.

He has called the measures a much-needed reform package to get California back on its financial feet, and he is expected to call a special election for November.

The protesters weren't content to limit their efforts to the hotel. They also took their complaints to the governor's biggest financial backers, showing up outside the Gap store on Post Street to criticize the \$225,000 in contributions company founder Don Fisher and his family have given to Schwarzenegger and his committees.

"I shop at the Gap, and Donald Fisher's support helps Arnold, so I want to send a message that we'd really like him to get behind students instead," said Erin Garvey, a 29-year-old University of San Francisco law student who was one of 25 protesters. "It makes sense that if you're so reliant on students as consumers, you should listen to their needs."

---

### Opposing the governor's plans

Organizers of the rally Tuesday night outside San Francisco's Ritz-Carlton Hotel represented groups with different complaints about Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's plan to change the way government operates in California. Here's a rundown:

**Nurses:** Upset at governor's efforts to stop increased staffing at California hospitals. Schwarzenegger says he blocked the lower nurse-to-patient ratios because the change would be too costly to hospitals and would force cuts such as the closure of emergency rooms. A judge overturned the governor's decision, forcing hospitals as of last month to hire enough nurses to meet the lower nurse-to-patient ratio.

**Teachers:** Opposed to governor's plan to make it tougher for teachers to get tenure, to require pay raises to be only merit-based and to change the funding guarantee for California schools. Schwarzenegger touts the proposals as essential to shake up schools and improve education.

**Firefighters and police:** Worried the governor's initiatives would limit pension and end death benefits. Schwarzenegger says the changes to public sector pensions are needed to ensure the programs are financially sound well into the future.

**Labor unions:** Concerned about proposed changes in public employee pensions and about the governor's support for efforts to limit union fund-raising. Schwarzenegger has lashed out at unions as special interests and says he is trying to curtail their political power.

Seniors, community groups and social justice organizations: Unhappy at governor's embrace of big business groups at his fund-raisers and possible cuts to social programs.

Source: Chronicle staff

*Chronicle staff writer Patricia Yollin contributed to this report*E-mail the writers at [jgarofoli@sfgate.com](mailto:jgarofoli@sfgate.com), [cmarinucci@sfgate.com](mailto:cmarinucci@sfgate.com) and [jwildermuth@sfgate.com](mailto:jwildermuth@sfgate.com).

Page A - 1

URL: <http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/04/06/MNGBBC3S7H1.DTL>

---

[©2005 San Francisco Chronicle](#)