

Harvey Milk and Proposition 6

Harvey Milk was born in New York in 1930. When he grew up, he worked on Wall Street. He was also gay. For most of his adult life, Milk was "closeted." That meant he was private about being gay.

By 1972, he had "come out" (became public about being gay). He moved to San Francisco, Calif. He opened a camera store. In 1973, he became interested in politics.

Milk ran for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He lost. But in 1975, the mayor appointed him to be part of city government. In 1977, Milk ran again for the Board of Supervisors. This time, he won.



Harvey Milk, seen here in 1978, was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in California. (Daniel Nicoletta, Wikimedia Commons.)

Milk was the first openly gay politician elected in California. In a speech during his campaign, he spoke about young gay people. He said, "The only thing they have to look forward to is hope. And you have to give them hope."

In 1978, Californians had to vote on Proposition 6. This was a proposed law that would ban gay and lesbian teachers from working in public schools. It would also ban school employees from supporting gay rights.

Milk thought it was unfair discrimination against gays. He debated the sponsor of Proposition 6 and helped persuade Californians against it. Governor Jerry Brown and former governor Ronald Reagan also opposed Proposition 6. Most voters voted against it, and it was defeated.

Harvey Milk became a powerful politician in San Francisco. He was also known nationwide. Sadly, Milk and the mayor were killed when a former supervisor shot them in 1978. Milk has remained a civil rights icon.