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Hugh Hefner's Playboy mansion is a 30,000-square-foot residence in the Holmby Hills area, in western Los Angeles.

Mansion a Frequent Host to Political Events

By GREG KRIKORIAN

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As a symbol of bacchanalian escapades, few if any homes can rival Hugh Hefner's Playboy mansion in the hills of Holmby.

A 30,000-square-foot, Tudor-style castle. A grotto complete with waterfall. A state license to house all manner of exotic birds, fish—even squirrel monkeys. The largest privately held stand of redwoods in Southern California. All on a six-acre spread a few breezy miles from the Pacific Ocean.

No wonder not a week goes by when Hef's house isn't hosting a party for as few as 15 people or as many as 1,500. But if the mansion's mere mention conjures images of barely dressed playmates with pajama-wearing suitors—as it apparently has for some in the furor over Rep. Loretta Sanchez's now-canceled plans there for a fund-raiser—the image is not always the reality.

Over the years, the mansion has hosted many a political event, featuring the likes of ex-Gov. Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown Jr., former Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley and even onetime presidential candidates—from John Anderson to Eugene McCarthy.

Even though Sanchez (D-Garden Grove) decided Friday to move her event to B.B. King's Blues Club at Universal Studios' City Walk, the mansion tonight will host a party with a convention theme; confirmed guests include conservative commentator Oliver North, former Clinton aide George Stephanopolous, television's Bryant Gumble and commenta-

tor Arianna Huffington, according to Playboy officials.

Over the years, Hefner has used his publishing empire—and his world famous parties—as a sort of bunny pulpit. Railing against the Vietnam War, supporting the civil rights movement, endorsing abortion rights, Hefner has never shied from politically controversial positions—many of them, ironically, championed by the same party whose leadership, at least publicly, is now seeking distance.

"I've been a big supporter of the Democratic Party since the 1960s," Hefner said in an interview Friday, adding that his political activism has been welcome for decades—a fact, he said, that makes the flap over the Sanchez event almost unimaginable to him.

In comments before the fund-raiser was moved, he said: "It is just bizarre. There isn't a single thing about the event that is not first-rate or classy. There won't be any bunnies here or anything untoward."

As such, he said, the uproar seemed to confirm his worst fears about today's political environment.

"Critics sometimes suggest we are beating a dead horse in talking about the puritanical nature of this country. But if there was ever evidence of it, here it is," Hefner said. "In another context in another country, this would look childish and hypocritical."

Despite the controversy, Hefner said he would continue to support the Democratic Party. "This certainly doesn't change my lifelong commitment to the Democrats," he said. "One has to consider the alternative."