



Spousal Support for Maria Shriver? Schwarzenegger Says No, Then Yes

By [Bonnie Rochman](#) Wednesday, July 27, 2011

Call it Public Relations 101: when you've publicly shamed your accomplished wife by fathering a child with the family housekeeper, don't stick your wife with the bill for her own support and divorce attorney.

Former Calif. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been drawing public ire since he checked a box in his divorce filing last week that indicated he did not want his wife of 25 years, Maria Shriver, to be awarded spousal support.

For sure, Shriver's a wealthy woman in her own right. But come on.

On Monday, the [Los Angeles Times](#) reported that he backtracked, submitting an amended filing that essentially amounted to him saying: "Oops, I made a mistake. And by the way, I'll spring for legal counsel, too."

He gave no explanation about why he changed his mind, but it's safe to assume it was an attempt to back-pedal and rehab his image. In May, Schwarzenegger acknowledged he'd [fathered a child](#) more than 10 years ago with a longtime employee of the family.

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"From a publicity standpoint, it was a dumb move," says Paul Talbert, a New York City divorce attorney at Chemtob Moss Forman & Talbert, LLP, which focuses on high net-worth clients.

"Given who he is and what he's done, I think he wanted to make sure that his public image was not tarnished further. He appeared as if he was being cheap or not being generous with Maria Shriver given everything that's transpired between the two of them."

On July 1, Shriver [filed for divorce](#), citing “irreconcilable differences.” She checked boxes indicating she was asking that the “petitioner” — Shriver — receive spousal support and the “respondent” — Schwarzenegger — be responsible for legal fees. She also requested joint custody of two of their four children who are still minors.

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Talbert isn't surprised that Schwarzenegger initially expressed no interest in paying spousal support. It's not uncommon, in a high-stakes divorce, for the more moneyed spouse to assume that a multi-million dollar settlement is more than sufficient for a former partner, without adding in spousal support or attorney's fees.

In a typical case, explains Talbert, each half of a super-wealthy couple worth, say, \$500 million would end up with \$250 million. Assuming 5% interest each year, a \$250 million settlement would yield \$12.5 annually — more than enough to live on, no matter who you are.

Still. In many people's eyes, consorting with the housekeeper demands some sort of serious contrition. Be that spousal support or attorney's fees, it's still not likely to make Shriver feel too kindly toward her former sweetheart. But at least it's a conciliatory gesture.

In any case, trying to surmise what sort of deal Schwarzenegger and Shriver may end up brokering is a guessing game in any case. “This was just a form filing,” says Talbert. “I strongly suspect these two are going to resolve their case behind closed doors, confidentially.”

Bonnie Rochman is a reporter at TIME. Find her on Twitter at [@brochman](#). You can also continue the discussion on TIME's [Facebook page](#) and on Twitter at [@TIME](#).

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