



# Western PA Freedom to Marry Coalition

## *Marriage Announcements*

May 1996

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## Anti-Marriage Legislation Introduced

### **Pennsylvania legislation would void legal marriages of same-sex couples**

Imagine that your friend Chris and her spouse were coming from Hawaii to visit you. While here, Chris's spouse is in an accident and taken to the hospital. When you arrive, Chris is in hysterics. The hospital will not accept Chris's spousal health insurance. Life and death decisions need to be made, but the hospital claims that Chris has no next-of-kin rights to make these decisions. Chris's spouse is also a woman, and legislation introduced in the state legislature and in Congress seeks to make this example a reality should same-sex couples ever win the right to marry.

Same sex marriage is not legal anywhere in the United States. A court case in the state of Hawaii is currently looking at the issue, but a final decision is not expected for about two years. Last week the religious right's attempt to divide the country and make homosexuality a campaign issue escalated with the introduction of federal anti-marriage bills called DOMA- the "Defense of Marriage Act." H.R. 3396/S 1704. Also, on May 8, Pennsylvania Rep. Allan Egolf (R — Franklin County) and 37 cosponsors introduced H.B. 2604.

Pennsylvania H.B. 2604 would do two things.

First, it defines that only a man and a woman may enter into marriage in Pennsylvania. There is no need for such a restriction. Pennsylvania has never recognized marriages of same-sex couples nor is there any litigation pending that could force a change to this policy.

Second, the bill would also void any marriage where the couple is of the same-sex, even if that marriage were

valid in the state where it was performed. Legally married couples could find themselves suddenly unmarried while in friendly Pennsylvania!

The U.S. and Pennsylvania bills are active now and it is important to contact both federal and state lawmakers immediately to let them know that there is constituent support for the freedom to marry.

### **Dole endorses Defense of Marriage Act**

#### **Republican nominee panders to Radical Right**

Human Rights Campaign (WASHINGTON) — Presumptive GOP presidential nominee Bob Dole is pandering to extremists by becoming the first U.S. senator to co-sponsor a national bill to prohibit equal marriage rights for lesbian and gay Americans. Dole, R-Kan. and the Senate majority leader, has co-sponsored S. 1740, the "Defense of Marriage Act," introduced Wednesday by Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla.

"Rather than moving to the center, Senator Dole is again pandering to extremists in a desperate election-year bid to score political points at the expense of lesbian and gay Americans," said HRC Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. "It really says something that Bob Dole felt driven to jump onto this bill even before Congress'

### **Federal Defense of Marriage Act isn't**

LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND (NEW YORK, May 8, 1996) Acting at the request of religious-political extremist groups, Rep. Bob Barr (R-GA) and other House Republicans today introduced, H.R. 3396, a bill that would insert the federal government for the first time in our country's history into decisions about marriage, an area traditionally left to the states and to individual couples.

In all fifty states lesbian and gay couples are currently denied the fundamental freedom to marry. Though we are litigating in Hawaii for the basic right to share in the responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage, our case is still at least two years away from making its way through the courts, beginning with a lower-court trial later this year.

Unsatisfied with current barriers against gay people getting married, the bill's sponsors seek to codify unprecedented federal-level blanket discrimination against lesbian and gay couples. At the same time, their bill, ironically entitled "the Defense of Marriage Act," would rewrite a federal law first adopted in 1789, in order to permit states to single out lawfully-married gay couples for uncertainty and discrimination against their marriages as they move from state to state.

This anti-gay attack, pushed by religious-political extremist groups like the Traditional Values Coalition, is a throwback to ugly, not so long-ago chapters of American history. Fair-minded Americans can remember how less than thirty years ago, interracial couples were arrested for marrying the "wrong" per-

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## Defense of Marriage Act introduced

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son in the "wrong" state, and how people had to "go to Reno" to get a civil divorce.

If successful, those sponsoring this attack-bill would once again make America a house divided, in which couples who were lawfully married in one state literally would not know from day to day, state to state, whether they are married or not.

Most Americans understand that this is one country, and if you are married, you are married. Couples should not have to wonder whether they are legally married or not, or if their marriage will be respected by another state or agency, as they live their lives and protect their families. All lawfully married couples should be entitled to equal respect throughout the country, even if others do not like the race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation of the partners.

Couples, their children, employers, creditors, and others should not have to deal with the legal and practical nightmare this election-year "wedge" bill would create.

People from Hawaii to Maine have just begun thinking about how the denial of civil marriage harms real-life gay couples. H.R. 3396 is an election-year attempt to poison the discussion beginning in this country about equal marriage rights for all Americans, a discussion that the radical-right groups behind the bill do not want people to have.

Marriage should not be a "special right for heterosexuals only," as the bill's sponsors suggest. But whatever one's stand on ending discrimination against gay and lesbian couples, public discussion should continue in every state, without congressional interference.

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## Sample Letter to Congressman opposing Defense of Marriage Act

Representative

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative,

I am writing to urge you to strongly oppose H.R. 3396, the so-called "Defense of Marriage Act," introduced by Representatives Bob Barr (R-GA) and Steve Largent (R-OK). This legislation is nothing more than a coordinated election year strategy by religious political extremists to score political points on the backs of gay men and lesbians.

Same sex marriage is not legal anywhere in the United States. A court case in the state of Hawaii is currently looking at the issue, but a final decision is not expected for about 2 years. This kind of premature legislation is nothing more than an attempt to divide the country by beating up on gay men and lesbians. Congress should be attending to the business of the country, not attacking American citizens.

Marriage is a basic human right. The decision of whom to marry is a deeply personal one that should not be interfered with by the federal government. Despite the rhetoric of the religious political extremists, one can honor the relationship between a man and woman without attacking lesbian and gay people or their relationships.

I again urge you to oppose this unnecessary and divisive legislation. I look forward to hearing your views on this matter.

Sincerely,

## Dole Cosponsors

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most militant anti-gay zealots, like Jesse Helms. It's just one more piece of evidence that Dole is floundering for an agenda."

The Human Rights Campaign issued a report Wednesday exposing the orchestrated efforts of religious political extremist groups to pass anti-marriage bills in at least 34 states. U.S. Rep. Bob Barr, R-Ga., introduced an anti-gay marriage bill in the House on Tuesday. It has a handful of co-sponsors.

Currently, lesbian and gay couples cannot get legally married anywhere in the United States. Hawaii, the only state that is anywhere near the possibility of extending equal marriage rights to gay people, will probably not resolve the issue for at least two more years.

Birch noted that the timing of the anti-marriage organizing demonstrates the political nature of the frenzy surrounding the issue.

"These state and national anti-marriage bills propose to prohibit something that does not even exist. The anti-gay groups that are coordinating this flood of anti-marriage activity are shamelessly attempting to inject the issue into the heat of the presidential campaign, and Bob Dole is taking their bait," Birch added. "These measures are cynically calculated to divide the country, promote more congressional extremism and scapegoat one group of Americans."

Dole's co-sponsorship of the Senate bill is not his first action on the issue during the presidential race. In February, he sent a letter of support to the organizers of an anti-gay rally in Des Moines, Iowa, endorsing their anti-marriage resolution but saying that it "does not go far enough."

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# What you can do to help

## Letter writing is an effective way of communicating with your representatives

History will record May 8, 1996 as the day when the anti-marriage backlash struck the nation. On that day, three bills were introduced that if enacted into law, would void legal marriages of same-sex couples.

As Pennsylvanians concerned about this issue, it can be a frustrating time. Our elected representatives are making important decisions that affect our lives and our happiness, but they have not had time to really consider the issue. It is vital that we educate them and let them know that they have constituent support for allowing same-sex couples to marry.

Representatives value input from their constituents. Taking the time to

write a letter demonstrates to them that you care about that issue. If you don't have time to write, a phone call to their office also counts.

The Radical Right wants to shut down the marriage debate, and they have ignorance on their side. Many people have forgotten that states had laws against interracial marriage less than 30 years ago, or that traditionally a woman was the property of her husband. Our representatives need to understand that marriage is an institution that has evolved. Making marriage more inclusive and more equal is not something that should be opposed.

A sample letter to a congress person is on page 2. A sample letter to a state legislator is included below. It is important to contact all your representatives: state legislator, Congress person, and two U.S. Senators. We know that they'll hear from our opposition -- they need to hear from us too.

### Legislator

c/o House Box 202020  
Harrisburg PA 17120-2020

Dear Representative Name,

I am writing concerning House Bill 2604. I oppose this legislation and support the right of same-sex couples to marry.

No state or Pennsylvania county will currently issue a marriage license to a couple of the same-sex. A court decision that may permit same-sex couples to legally marry in Hawaii is two years from being decided. Doesn't the General Assembly have anything better to do than consider legislation that has no compelling purpose?

If marriage for same-sex couples is ever legalized, House Bill 2604 would create a legal nightmare. How will companies be able to maintain coherent personnel policies if their offices are required by conflicting state laws to treat the same employee differently depending on the state where he or she is working? Why would legally married couples want to visit or tour our historic state if their marriages cease to exist when they cross our border? This legislation is counter to established legal rules and regulations regarding marriage and is bad policy.

I hope that you will oppose this legislation.

## Who to contact

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### President William Clinton

The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave  
Washington DC 20500  
(202) 456-1414

Urge President Clinton to oppose the Defense of Marriage Act

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### Senator Arlen Specter

530 Hart Senate Building  
Washington DC 20510-4254  
(202) 224-4254  
(412) 644-3400

### Senator Rick Santorum

120 Russell Building  
Washington DC 20510-3804  
(202) 224-6324  
(412) 562-0533

Urge the Senators to oppose S1740, the Defense of Marriage Act

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Urge your Congress Person to oppose H.R. 3396, the Defense of Marriage Act

In Pittsburgh:

**Representative William Coyne**  
2455 Rayburn House Office Bldg  
Washington DC 20515

In Penn Hills area:

**Representative Michael Doyle**  
1218 Longworth House Office Bldg  
Washington DC 20515

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Urge your state legislator to oppose House Bill 2604.

c/o House Box 202020  
Harrisburg PA 17120-2020

*Pittsburgh Area Legislators:*

Ronald Cowell, Wilkinburg  
Frank Dermody, Cheswick  
Greg Fajt, Mt Lebanon  
Ron Gamble, Oakdale  
Jeffrey Habay, Glenshaw  
Ivan Itkin, Squirrel Hill  
David Levdansky, Elizabeth  
Frank Pistella, Bloomfield  
Joe Preston, East Liberty

# Clinton Aides Questioned on Pending Legislation

## THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary  
May 13, 1996

PRESS BRIEFING BY MIKE  
MCCURRY

...[deleted]

**Q** Mike, does the President have a position on same-sex marriage, and if Congress passes a bill outlawing it, would he sign it?

**MR. MCCURRY:** The President's against same-sex marriage. We'll have to look carefully at the legislation that's under consideration in the Congress.

...[deleted]

**Q** If I can just follow up on a previously asked question. You said the President is against same-sex marriage. Is this a position he's espoused before? Because it seems to me when this has come up in the past, you've tried to kind of finesse it, and I've never heard this kind of — that I remember, this kind of pronouncement.

**MR. MCCURRY:** It reflects his views that he's articulated in the past and it reflects his position on the issue.

**Q** Why does he oppose same-sex marriages?

**MR. MCCURRY:** He believes this is a time when we need to do things to strengthen the American family, and that's the reason why he's taken this position.

**Q** He doesn't think that strengthens the —

**Q** To your knowledge has his position been enunciated before publicly?

**MR. MCCURRY:** Yes

**Q** When?

**MS. GLYNN:** As early as 1992, but after that as well.

**MR. MCCURRY:** I think — in 1992, Mary Ellen says.

**Q** How does he feel about legislation that would outlaw it?

**MR. MCCURRY:** Well, there is a piece of legislation that is under consideration on the Hill and we'll look at the legislation.

...[deleted]

**Q** Mike, would you enunciate why you think that same-sex marriage — or why the President thinks it would weaken the institution of the American family?

**MR. MCCURRY:** I haven't talked to the President at length on it, but I'll talk to him further and amplify that. I just gave you our position.

...[deleted]

**Q** Mike, just to follow up briefly on Carl's question about the same-sex marriage, if you could run that down it would be a help I think because there are many people like Andrew Sullivan and others who argue that the inability of gay couples to get married and have legally sanctioned partnerships is what keeps homosexual relationships from taking on stable family-type relationships — monogamy, et cetera, et cetera. And I wondered how that's anti-family.

**MR. MCCURRY:** Good. I will. *(Laughter.)*

**Q** If you don't want to elaborate on it now for our —

**MR. MCCURRY:** No.

# WPafTMC Plans for Community Events

The Western Pennsylvania Freedom to Marry Coalition plans to attend several community and organization events in the coming month. We will have a table at the Memorial Day picnic, and participate in Pride Week activities.

WPafTMC will be collecting signatures on the **Marriage Resolution**, distributing information on the anti-marriage resolution, and selling t-shirts.

The t-shirts are all cotton, have our logo on the front, and the marriage resolution on the back. Proceeds from the sale of t-shirts goes to the fight for the freedom to marry.

If you would like to help out at these events, or know of other events where we can distribute information, please call us at 362-4685.

Also, visit us on the World Wide Web at <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/user/scotts/ftp/wpaf2mc/>.

Join the fight!

### The Marriage Resolution

Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice, **RESOLVED**, the state should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities, and commitment of civil marriage.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
print name

\_\_\_\_\_  
address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
phone

Mail to WPafTMC, c/o 507 Gettysburg St  
Pittsburgh PA 15206