



Western PA Freedom to Marry Coalition

Marriage Announcements

June, 1996

Volume 1 Issue 2

Anti-marriage legislation threatening in PA Senate Temporary victory when senators miss committee vote

On May 22, anti-marriage legislation was introduced in the Pennsylvania Senate. Like its counterpart in the house, Senate Bill 1558 would block the recognition of lawful marriages for same-sex couples. Just two weeks later on June 4, the Senate Judiciary Committee had scheduled a vote on the proposed legislation.

Pro-marriage groups, including the Pennsylvania Freedom to Marry Coalitions, League of Gay and Lesbian Voters, the American Civil Liberties Union, and others mobilized by contacting senators and staff. Senator Stewart Greenleaf, the chairman of the committee, had considered this a simple issue. By the time of the meeting, we had succeeded in educating a number of key senators of the numerous problems with this type of legislation.

When the meeting time came, only four senators showed up. A minimum of six senators is necessary to take any action, so no business was conducted. After the meeting, Senator Greenleaf expressed his belief that heterosexual marriage deserves special rights in our society. However, the senator did agree to meet with pro-marriage representatives to talk about the issue.

Our victory in the Senate is only temporary. The Senate Judiciary Committee meets every week, and the bill can be brought up for a vote at anytime. It is vitally important that pro-marriage supporters contact their state representatives and senators and urge them to oppose the anti-marriage legislation.

President Clinton speaks on Marriage Rights

Excerpt from Press Conference by President Clinton and German Chancellor Kohl

May 23, 1996

[...]

Q Mr. President, yesterday your Press Secretary said that you would sign a bill banning recognition of same-sex marriages. What do you say to those who feel that this discriminates against gays and lesbians? And how do you respond to the many gays who supported you who now feel betrayed?

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Well, first of all, as I understand it, what the bill does — let's make it clear. As I understand it, what the bill does is to state that marriage is an institution between a man and a woman, that, among other things, is used to bring children into the world, but the legal effect of the bill — as I understand it, the only legal effect of the bill is to make it clear that states can deny recognition of gay marriages that occurred in other states. And if that's all it does, then I will sign it.

Now, having said that, I do not favor discrimination against people because they're homosexual. And you asked me what I would say to gay Americans who may disagree with me about this is — I say, look at my record. Name me another President who has been so pilloried for standing up for the fact that we shouldn't discriminate against any group of Americans, including gay Americans, who are willing to work hard, pay their taxes, obey the law and be good citizens.

And let me just say, even though — I will sign this bill if that's what it does, and that's what I understand it does. This is hardly a problem that is sweeping the country. No state has legalized gay mar-

riages. Only one state is considering it. We all know why this is in Washington now — it's one more attempt to divert the American people from the urgent need to confront our challenges together. That's really what's going on here. And I'm determined — this has always been my position on gay marriage. It was my position in '92. I told everybody who asked me about it, straight or gay, what my position was. I can't change my position on that; I have no intention of it.

But I am going to do everything I can to stop this election from degenerating into an attempt to pit one group of Americans against another. Every time we do that the American people make a mistake. We are a better country than that. We're a greater country than that. And we ought not to do it, and I'm going to do what I can to stop it. (*Applause.*)

Fighting Passed Clinton

(LLDEF) President Clinton has announced — for now — that he would sign the radical, unprecedented, vicious and unconstitutional federal anti-marriage bill.

Of course, this President has in the past announced he would sign other legislation as a political gesture, only to retreat and ultimately veto when guided appropriately by aggrieved members of his base. To give just one example, Marian Wright Edelman's criticism of his playing to the right turned the tide on extremist legislation that would have gutted vital services under the appealing rubric of "welfare reform." Sometimes people have to be

Continued

Responding to the media is an important way to influence opinion

Writing letters to the editor helps get our perspective to others and educates the community

It seems like marriage for same-sex couples is being discussed almost everyday in either the newspaper or on television. Just as it is important to share our ideas with our elected representatives, it is also important to give feedback to editors and news-producers, and let them know that there is support for marriage-rights in the community.

One easy way to give feedback is to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. A letter that is published allows the writer to share

his or her views with the readers of the newspaper. It provides a personal angle that news reporting sometimes lacks.

Letters that are short and to the point almost always get published. As a general rule of thumb, letters should be less than 200

words, and make one or two points. Below is an example response to a hypothetical article about events that occurred in the senate. Its single point is that the legislation is not needed.

Dear Editor

Your article Senate fails to act on same-sex marriages quoted the chairman's opposition to marriage for same-sex couples. However, this is not reason enough to be raising this issue now.

Pennsylvania does not allow same-sex couples to marry, and neither does any other state. While there is a case pending in the Hawaiian courts that might allow same-sex couples to marry, a decision is at least two years away. There is no compelling need for this legislation.

This issue is being raised now as an attempt by some to gay bash and divide our country. Doesn't our state legislature have more important things to do than this?

Your Representatives and how to contact them

bold face indicates support for marriage rights; *italics* opposes; and, underline unknown

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

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

Urge your Congress Person to oppose H.R. 3396, the Defense of Marriage Act
Washington DC 20515

Pittsburgh: **Representative William Coyne**
2455 Rayburn House Office Bldg

Penn Hills: Representative Michael Doyle
1218 Longworth House Office Bldg

North Huntingdon: Representative Ron Klink
125 Cannon House Office Bldg

Fayette: Representative Frank Mascara
1531 Longworth House Office Bldg

Urge your state legislator to oppose House Bill 2604.

c/o House Box 202020
Harrisburg PA 17120-2020

Pittsburgh Area Legislators:
Ronald Cowell, Wilkinburg
Anthony DeLuca, Penn Hills
Frank Dermody, Cheswick
Greg Fajt, Mt Lebanon

Elaine Farmer, Richland
Ron Gamble, Oakdale
Frank Gigliotti, South Side
Jeffrey Habay, Glenshaw
Ivan Itkin, Squirrel Hill
Ralph Kaiser, Whitehall
Alan Kukovich, North Huntingdon
Susan Laughlin, NW Allegheny
David Levdansky, Elizabeth
David Mayernick, Ross Twp
Thomas Michlovich, Bradock
Herman Mihalich, Monesson

Richard Olasz, West Mifflin
Joseph Petrarca, Vandergrift
Frank Pistella, Bloomfield
Joe Preston, East Liberty
Harry Readshaw, Baldwin
William Robinson, Oakland
Jess Stairs, Acme
Thomas Tangretti, Greensburg
Fred Trello, Stowe
Terry Van Horne, Arnold
Don Walko, North Side

Urge your state senator to oppose SB1558.

c/o Senate Post Office, Main Capitol, Harrisburg PA 17120
Pittsburgh Area Legislators:
Gibson Armstrong, Lancaster
Albert Belan, West Mifflin
Jay Costa Jr, East End/Homestead
Michael Fisher, South Hills
Mellisa Hart, North Hills
Richard Kasunic, Dunbar
Gerald LaValle, Rochester
Eugene Porterfield, Greensburg
Robert Robbins, Greenville
Tim Shaffer, Butler
Patrick Stapleton, Indiana
Barry Stout, Eighty Four
Jack Wagner, Pittsburgh

Fighting Passed President Clinton's Opposition to Marriage Rights

helped to help themselves.

So even as regards the White House, it isn't over 'til it's over. And then it's still not over.

But the work still before us is to do what we can to make sure this sweeping "second-class citizenship" legislation never reaches the President's desk. **WE MUST FIGHT IN CONGRESS.**

So people MUST be heard in Congress now — Republicans and Democrats. Particularly we should be firming up our "friends" in the Senate, taking no one for granted, to urge them to block, delay, question, amend/amend/amend these bills. Particularly reach out to friendly Senators, Senators in pivotal states, and also those Republicans that might get a message through to Bob Dole (the original co-sponsor of the Senate bill) that pushing these bills will backfire and hurt him, his party, and the country.

Surely Congress has more pressing business in the brief legislative session still left (less than 30 legislative days). And as Monday's Supreme Court decision illustrated, anything can happen; outside events can intervene and help us... if we keep time on our side.

Above all, hard as it is to keep fighting, we also need to remember that even if this hideous and unconstitutional discrimination passes for now, the Freedom to Marry struggles and national discussion will continue — state by state, and, unstoppably, around kitchentables throughout the country — over the weeks, months, and years ahead.

Our trial in Hawaii is this fall; hopefully, a victory in the lower court will arrive before the end of the year; we will pursue the case to completion within two years; we will fight legislative battles in most of the states again next year and then we will move

into the phase of the struggle (legal, political, and public educational) that awaits us once some of us are finally able to get married. And as we stick with it, we will win.

1. Write/Call/E-mail/Visit Senators and members of Congress (in the district as well as DC).

2. Blitz the White House to say, "think anew." Whether or not one supports equal marriage rights, these bills are unconstitutional and cruel; they should be vetoed (as Gov. Romer did in Colorado).

3. Hit the press with stories, letters, and arguments.

4. Get non-gay friends and family to do the same — NOW. Openly non-gay people have a very important contribution to make here.

5. Get materials, talking points, analyses, and help from the Western PA Freedom to Marry Coalition and **CIRCULATE THEM.**

Remember: our enemies want to shut down the marriage discussion, fearing the opportunity it gives us to shatter the stereotypes, speak about our lives and families in a powerful rhetoric of truth, and secure full equality. We must not let them think their state by state aggression, or this federal assault, will stop us from engaging the non-gay persuadable public.

As Martin Luther King instructed us, "In the current struggle, there is one positive course of action. There is no alternative, for the alternative would connote a rear march.... In this Revolution, no plans have been written for retreat. Those who will not get into step will find that the parade has passed them by.... The sooner our society admits that the ... Revolution is no momentary outburst soon to subside into placid passivity, the easier the future will be for us all."

Coalition decides on structure

At the last meeting, we discussed and adopted a structure for the coalition's operations. We came to the conclusion that the committee structure was not working. There needs to be a workable structure that is efficient, encourages participation by a wide variety of individuals and groups, and is responsive to political and social change.

The new, less formalistic method of getting things done can best be described as a "*who wants to take on this project*" approach. The coalition will depend on individual volunteers who commit to a specific task, such as helping with a mailing for example. Individuals who volunteer to lead on-going projects would report back to the group each month or as needed.

The manner in which monthly meetings are organized has also become more open. An "*agenda*" will be generated at the beginning of each meeting with anyone attending having input. One person will function as a facilitator. The facilitator is responsible for listing each item and ensuring that the group's discussions remain focused. The person who fills the role of the facilitator will rotate each month.

The meetings will take place the 2nd Tuesday of every month from 7:00-8:30. Because meetings have been attended by a small, core group, we decided to meet at individuals homes for the time being. Anyone who would like to attend a meeting can call Scott at 362-4685 to find out where the next meeting will be.

The next meetings will be June 11 and July 9.

The Impact of the Supreme Court's Decision in *Evans v Romer* on Marriage Rights

NEW YORK (May 24, 1996) Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund detailed Friday numerous constitutional barriers to federal anti-marriage bills, saying they are really attacks against lesbians and gay men.

"The anti-marriage bills now before Congress are gratuitous, vicious, and unconstitutional," said Evan Wolfson, director of Lambda's Marriage Project, noting that no state in the country recognizes civil marriages by gay couples. "Pretending to give discretionary power to the states, the bills really would grab new powers for the federal government," he added.

Wolfson, who is co-counsel on *Baehr v. Miike*, the Hawaii case seeking the freedom to marry for gay people, said this week's Supreme Court ruling in *Romer v. Evans* bolsters constitutional arguments against the proposed federal legislation, which would invent an unprecedented federal definition of marriage and exclude any lawfully married gay couples from the protections of civil marriage.

"With this week's historic decision, the Supreme Court made clear that laws aimed at withdrawing legal rights from a targeted group here, lesbians and gay men are unconstitutional on equal protection grounds," Wolfson said. "The anti-gay effort to create two classes of lawful marriages is precisely what the Court calls a classification of persons undertaken for its own sake...to make them unequal to everyone else'," Wolfson said, quoting Monday's decision. "Congress just cannot do that."

Wolfson summarized several legal objections to the federal anti-marriage bills:

1. Violating the Tenth Amendment, which reserves powers for the states, the bills would insert the federal government for the first time in history into the definition of marriage. The bills give Congress the power to dictate what

are "good" marriages and "bad" marriages, punishing the latter by denying federal protections and benefits such as social security, federal pensions for surviving spouses, and "family unification" in immigration.

2. The bills would violate the Constitution's Full Faith and Credit clause, which requires that official acts and proceedings of each state be recognized by sister states. Congress does not have the constitutional power to decide when a state act gets interstate respect or when people are stripped of those rights as they travel through the country.

3. The bills would violate constitutional protections that forbid the Government from discriminating by creating a disfavored, second-class of citizens or marriages.

4. The bills would make America a "house divided" for the couples who would be unsure whether they remained married whenever they moved or traveled from state to state. This also would create an untenable situation for these couples' children, their employers, creditors, businesses, government agencies, and others.

5. These unconstitutional election-year bills appeal to anti-gay disapproval, dislike, or discomfort the very animus rejected by the Supreme Court as a basis for government discrimination.

"Regardless of how people feel right now about civil marriage for lesbians and gay men, these bills are bad law. People are just beginning to talk about equal marriage rights, and Congress should not choke off public debate to indulge in election-year attacks against lesbians and gay men," Wolfson said, adding, "Committed lesbian and gay relationships are a reality. Allowing our relationships to share in civil marriage would not destabilize or detract from non-gay marriages."

Deb Henson says goodbye

I wanted to say goodbye to all of you I've met through this coalition-building process since January of this year. I'll be heading south in early July - not a great time to move back to New Orleans, but other than that, I'm excited about the move because I love the Crescent City (the Big Easy) despite its challenges. I urge you to call me if ever you find yourself in New Orleans - I'm always listed in the phone book and, at least for the next year, can also be reached at the Louisiana Supreme Court in Justice Lemmon's chambers. I've thoroughly enjoyed my "co-troublemaker" activities with Scott Safier in founding this coalition. I know you all will carry on valiantly and I do hope to keep updated on your progress. We all have a big mountain ahead of us given the existence of the federal legislation (DOMA) and the political agenda of using this issue to divide the Democrats. We need to be working locally and nationally - that's a lot to ask of people who also have to work for a living!!! But talking with others can keep the momentum going and we can do our own little pieces of activism wherever and whenever we can manage to squeeze them into our lives. I'm convinced that even the least bit of rabble-rousing for lesbian/gay equality will gradually change the shape of our country (world). Good luck and goodbye!!! Keep fighting! Deb Henson P.S. We are still trying to sell our house in Highland Park (right by the park and zoo). We may, however, be interested in renting it for a year if it doesn't sell in the next couple months. If you or anyone you know might be interested in talking about living in a spacious, 3-story old Victorian a block from Highland Park (with a fantastic yard with huge tulip tree and deck out back), please call me at 661-8208. We could talk about renting, buying, or renting with the option of buying. The neighborhood is quite diverse and very gay-friendly with many lesbians and gay men living nearby.

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PO Box 81253

Pittsburgh PA 15217-4253

(412) 362-4685.

www.cs.cmu.edu/afs/cs/user/scotts/wpaf2mc

Edited by Scott Safier

Volunteer Survey

Please complete the following survey to volunteer for the Freedom to Marry

NAME: _____

PHONE: _____

I would be willing to:

Comments/Ideas

- Help person a table at an event or bar
- Make phone calls in a phone tree to marriage supporters
- Help with mailings
- Be part of a lobby team
- Organize a lobby team
- Distribute marriage leaflets at your church or social organization
- Make emergency phone calls to legislators
- Sell t-shirts
- Write letters to editors
- Videotape news/public affairs broadcasts about same-sex marriage
- Cut and forward to us newspaper clippings about marriage
- Please contact me about trainings for the speaker's bureau**

Western PA Freedom to Marry Coalition plans for summer

T-shirts, Pride and Picnics start community outreach

Because we face a harsh backlash this presidential-election year, the Western Pennsylvania Freedom to Marry Coalition plans to be a visible part of the community, starting with this summer. The Pennsylvania Freedom to Marry Coalition has printed t-shirts with our colorful logo on

the front and the marriage resolution on the back. The 100% cotton t-shirts are \$10, with proceeds going to the Western PA Freedom to Marry Coalition. We have medium, large and extra large, and they can be ordered by calling 362-4685. The Western Pennsylvania Freedom to Marry Coalition will be marching in Pittsburgh's Pride Parade the morning of June 22 in Shadyside. We hope many marchers will be wearing the t-

shirt to show support for the freedom to marry. Representatives from the coalition were present at the Memorial Day picnic, and plan on having a table at the Labor Day picnic. We will also have informational tables at other events throughout the summer. We hope you stop by!

**Please place completed survey in an envelope and mail to
WPaFtMC
PO Box 81253
Pittsburgh, PA 15217-4253**

Minute from Pittsburgh's Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Passed during the Meeting for Business

Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting April 14, 1996.

It is fundamental to the faith and practice of the Religious Society of Friends

- * that we seek that of God in every person,
- * that we affirm the worth of all human beings,

and

* that we respect and support each individual's striving for personal integrity.

We believe that it is in the interest of society and its members for all citizens to have full and equal access to the rights and responsibilities of marriage. At present, the State offers legal recognition of opposite-gender marriage and supports such marriages by extending certain

rights as well as assigning clear responsibilities to the partners. Thus the State seeks to promote social stability through committed relationships and family structure. Gay and Lesbian couples have been denied legal access to the rights and responsibilities of marriage. Whether or not all Friends personally approve of same-gender relationships, the establishment of the same standard for same-gender and for opposite gender committed relationships is consistent with Friend's faith and testimonies.

We believe that the State should recognize same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage.