

July 2004

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Regarding “Marriage Protection Sunday”

Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood? Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God? -Issac Watts

Eight years ago, when it appeared that Hawaii’s Supreme Court was about to order up same-sex “marriage” for the island paradise, Congress and 38 states quickly enacted statutes precluding recognition of marriage that is not between one man and one woman. The *Defense of Marriage Act* was supported by 85 U.S. Senators and President Bill Clinton. Only John Kerry, the current presidential hopeful, and 14 others, all Democrats, voted against the federal version of DOMA.

But on the eve of another historic Senate vote on the institution of marriage, scheduled to take place next week, far fewer senators are defaulting to the heterosexual side of the equation. According to *Human Events*, only 29 members firmly support a Constitutional amendment stating that marriage in the United States is between one man and one woman, while 16 have lined up against the measure. Troubling, is the fact that 55 senators are still trying to make up their minds.

If politicians have been reluctant to take up the matter, it is, they say, because constituents aren’t calling. Recent opinion polls reveal that nearly a third of this fall’s likely voters aren’t aware that a marriage amendment is on the table. According to Fred Barnes, Editor of *The Weekly Standard*, this points to “a giant hole in the Bush campaign.”

Barnes believes that social and cultural issues, important to millions of Americans that do not regard themselves as Republicans, are being ignored in this campaign. He says, “These issues—especially gay marriage—may cause discomfort when raised among elites inside the Washington-New York-Los Angeles axis. Country club Republicans may wince when social issues are broached. Everyone else in America, however, talks easily and without embarrassment about gay marriage and abortion and public indecency. And they often decide how to vote on the basis of these issues—one where a large majority of Americans agree wholeheartedly with Bush and not with John Kerry.”¹

On the subject of gay “marriage,” Mr. Barnes says Team Bush seems to think it is political slumming to mention it. The Bush stump speech, he argues, continues to focus on taxes, Iraq, and terrorism—issues, according to polls, most voters have already decided in their minds. But avoiding gay “marriage,” an issue that deeply divides Democrats and swing voters, is to concede millions of votes of those who are unaware that George Bush has asked Congress for a federal marriage amendment.

Battleground polls show that President Bush is in trouble in several key states he won in 2000. One of them is Ohio, where foreign wars have never been popular, the economy is troubled, and there is wide perception that manufacturing jobs are being outsourced to third world countries. But in a recent private poll, when swing voters in Ohio were told of the Bush vs. Kerry position on gay marriage, 43 percent said they would be inclined to vote for Bush compared to only 26 percent for Kerry.

Among undecided voters, the results were an astonishing 51 percent for Bush and 8 percent for Kerry—a six-to-one advantage for the president—if he chooses to make marriage an issue. But, whether Bush and his Republican colleagues come to the party or not, voters in as many as 13 states this fall will decide if their own state constitutions should be amended to protect marriage as we know it.

Last week, efforts to submit a sufficient number of signatures to qualify marriage protection for the November ballot were successful in four more states. Each initiative obtained many more signatures than were required. Many, many, more.

In Montana, where only 41,000 valid signatures were necessary to put the marriage question to a vote of the people in November, 70,000 registered voters stepped up. Quite a few counties ponied up four-fold, the numbers needed, while Prairie County contributed five times the number of signatures required. Rep. Jeff Laszloffy (R-Laurel), author of CI-96, said it was “the most successful signature-gathering effort in Montana’s history.”

Grassroots organizers in Arkansas also turned heads with a record setting 200,693 signatures in support of traditional marriage—2 ½ times the 80,650 signatures required by state law. Also qualifying by nearly the same margins, the *Defense of Marriage Coalition* in neighboring Oregon produced nearly 245,000 signatures—more than a sufficient cushion beyond the 100,840 needed to get the measure before the people. A local auditor said it was the most ever for a single ballot measure in Oregon State history.

And, while it has not been reported as a record setting effort, supporters of traditional marriage in Michigan were thrilled to turn in 480,000 signatures—exceeding their goal by 163,000.

But even with such strong evidence that points to a groundswell of support for traditional marriage, most elected officials are plainly intimidated by the tactics of homosexual activists and their left-leaning sympathizers. Even pastors of fairly conservative evangelical churches have retreated somewhat in recent weeks because of stinging criticisms from members who do not want to hear about the “marriage issue,” especially at church!

Criticisms notwithstanding, Christian leaders around the nation have proclaimed Sunday, July 11 as “Marriage Protection Sunday” because of the important marriage amendment vote that is scheduled to take place during the week of July 12. Pastors and Sunday school teachers are being encouraged to lift up the God-ordained institution of marriage in their sermons and lesson plans, and to urge members to call their senators on July 12. The U.S. Capitol is: 202.224.3121.

In addition to calls to Senators Murray and Cantwell, the Christian Coalition of Washington suggests that calls should also be directed to the office of Rep. George Nethercutt who is running against Sen. Murray, but has declined to sign on to the bill in the House.

It is for these times and these circumstances that the Word of God says: *Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them...*(Deut 31:6). It is an exhortation to a people who appear to be at odds with the whole world. A people who are attempting do something that without a firm reliance on God—is unthinkable and impossible.

If the Church is to pray for those in authority, surely this is an hour for that prayer.

Rick Forcier

¹ Barnes, Fred, The Weekly Standard, *Bush’s Missing Issue*, 5/10/2004, <http://www.weeklystandard.com>