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The Politics of Sexual Orientation

The voters have watched this disgusting display of arrogance and selfishness for weeks. The issue has become hopelessly politicized.
--Tim Eyman, 1/30/2006

The new “sexual orientation” law will take affect 90 days following the end of the current legislative session—maybe. There are signs that the landmark social-reform measure could be headed for a vote of the people in November if opponents have their say. To have that say, they must acquire signatures of thousands of registered voters who think that proposals with such sweeping social consequences should be decided by the people—not a handful of politicians pandering to a powerful special interest group.

Although resistance to a “sexual orientation law” has been led for years by Christian groups, a growing consortium of non-religious organizations are expressing concerns, having read the fine print. Specifically, HB2661 defines “sexual orientation” as:

“...heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and gender expression or identity. As used in this definition, ‘gender expression or identity’ means having or being perceived as having a gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression, whether or not that gender identity, self-image, appearance, behavior, or expression is different from that traditionally associated with the sex assigned to that person at birth;...”

In this new millennium, the term “gender,” does not necessarily refer to one’s genetic assignment at conception—as in *male* or *female*. Under the new law, a person can be “both” or “none of the above,” as the situation requires. The potential for confusion and conflict in family law, in education, in the work place, and in public accommodations can be seen in a footnote to a similar “sexual orientation” ordinance in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which says:

“...a person born with a penis but identifying as a woman may be possessed of an appearance which is “unmistakably male,” such as coarse facial features, facial and body hair, broad shoulders. . . . When such a person identifies as a woman, and makes obvious attempts to be perceived as such, however ineffective, it is generally hurtful to categorize such a person as other than a woman, whereas categorizing this person as a woman does not in and of itself hurt others. Rather than traumatize the individual by exclusion, it is intended that we honor their obvious visible attempts to be womanly, and their self-identity as a woman, despite our expectations of how a woman should appear.”

Beneath the veneer, however, the “let’s all pretend law” demands much more than sensitivity toward people who “think outside their bodies.” Civil penalties of up to \$55,000 for hurtful comments or actions attest to that fact.

But talk about hurtful comments?

Within minutes following the historic Senate approval of HB2661, initiative guru and tax-cut crusader Tim Eyman, quickly made his way to the Secretary of State’s office where he announced plans to “LET THE VOTERS DECIDE” on the controversial issue of special-rights based on sexual behavior.

Predictably, the Left went ballistic, saying very hurtful things about Mr. Eyman. “He’s in it for the money.” “He’s a fascist.” “He’s a closet queer.” Obviously annoyed at the thought of public intermeddling in the matter, Representative Sam Hunt (D-Olympia) sputtered, “Eyman is stooping to a new low to line his pockets and get a list of bigots.”¹

The religious community, on the other hand, was also surprised but more than willing to give Tim Eyman a hearing. Behind-the-scene responses ranged from “How did Eyman get in the mix?”...and “Can we trust him?”...to...“Let’s just do it!” While such reactions are appropriate to the situation, they underscore the need for Divine guidance—especially considering a shift in the public attitude toward homosexuality in general.

That attitude was last tested in 1997 when a coalition of teachers, unions, and homosexual groups backed an initiative to the people asking the question, “Shall Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation Be Prohibited In...” The challenge for Christian leaders was to get their message out despite media bias, to frame the debate in terms easily understood by a secular audience, and to raise a budget for the campaign within the Church—the most daunting task of all!

Though outspent 13 to 1, conservatives delivered their message. Voters soundly rejected the “sexual orientation” initiative 60% - 40%, bringing it to defeat in 38 of 39 counties. Even so, there are concerns that times are different and that an effort to repeal the new law at the ballot box could precipitate a backlash—creating public empathy for “same-sex” marriage.

The board of directors and pastor-advisors of the Christian Coalition, however, believe we must continue to confront evil and warn of the possible consequences of this new law as we have done for many years—regardless of the risks. We are fully in support of a referendum that will ask voters to ACCEPT or REJECT the addition of the term “sexual orientation” to the state’s existing civil rights code.

Since the idea of an initiative has also been floated in the press, we would like to explain why we favor a referendum. Generally speaking, an initiative is used to propose new laws while a referendum refers a law passed by the Legislature to a vote of the people. An initiative requires signatures of legal voters equal to eight percent of the number of votes cast for the office of Governor at the last regular gubernatorial election—or 224,880 signatures. A referendum requires only half that number of signatures (112,440) and would put a hold on the law until voters have their say in November.

Either way, it goes without saying that the Church must be fully engaged in order to successfully challenge the new “sexual orientation” law. It will require considerably more than passing a petition around on Sunday morning and dropping it in the mail box on Monday. Hopefully, a church with say, 100 adults, will fan out into the community with 100 or more petitions in hand.

For those needing motivation, think of the “sexual orientation” law as wet cement. The longer we stand around in it, the harder it becomes.

Rick Forcier

Executive Director

¹ [Eyman seeks to ban gay rights](#), *The Olympian*, 1/30/2006