



Marriage

1 - FLORIDA SPECIFIC

Valentines Day has long been a time to celebrate the love and commitment people have for each other. But this year the extreme right chose Valentine's day to send very different message to our State and in particular to gay and lesbian families in Florida.

These extremists have launched a petition drive for an amendment banning legal recognition or protection for same sex families.

The extreme-right chose Valentines Day 2005 to make their cruel and bigoted message clear – that our love and our relationships are inferior to theirs. That some families are more valued than others. That some people should be branded as second-class citizens.

This is deeply personal. This is a direct and personal attack on our families and the love we share for each other.

Make no mistake, this campaign causes harm. The refusal to allow people the legal avenues to protect ourselves and our loved ones is harm. The denial of health benefits, or access to a loved one in a hospital room, these basic rights married people take for granted causes real and measurable harm.

This amendment is a blatant attempt to put discrimination into our state constitution. Our Constitution guarantees equal protection and dignity under the law for all our citizens. This amendment would single out one group of people for discrimination. That is wrong - the law should protect everyone equally.

Many fair-minded people of faith representing a broad range of religious perspectives are opposed to this amendment and are standing with us today. **This amendment is an attempt by one group of far right extremists to put their religious beliefs in our Constitution.** People who believe that religion should not run our government, and people who believe that government must not dictate our religious beliefs must join together in opposing this amendment.

We call on all Floridians to speak up and take a stand against discrimination.

Florida's Constitution serves to protect individual rights and must never be used as a tool of discrimination. Do not sign this petition and ask your friends and family to reject adding this discriminatory amendment to Florida's Constitution.

2 - GENERAL

The reason many same-sex couples want to get married is because we love each other and believe marriage provides the best means available to take care of each other and our children.

Same-sex couples live in every county, in every state in the nation. We are your neighbors and we make valuable contributions in our communities. Denying us the

freedom to marry means denying us and our children over 1,600 legal protection-including the right to visit our loved one in the hospital, to Social Security survivor benefits and to provide health insurance to our loved ones.

What makes our country great is our commitment freedom, equality and human rights. For decades, our country has recognized that the freedom to marry is one of these basic human rights.

Marriage is about two adults making a personal, intimate and permanent commitment to care for each other and to take on responsibilities and obligations for each other.

Allowing same-sex couples the freedom to marry would take nothing away from other marriages. It would only end the unfairness and discrimination facing tax-paying Americans.

Marriage is by no means the only framework for “family” and we respect all forms of family.

3 - CHILDREN

Marriage between parents, regardless of their sexual orientation, protects the best interest of children by providing an economic safety net.

6 to 10 million children would potentially benefit from their same-sex parents having the freedom to marry. And these children deserve to know their families are worthy of respect in the eyes of the law.

Most reputable national child advocacy organizations agree that the sexual orientation of a child’s parents has no impact on the child’s quality of life.

Blended families are becoming the traditional family.

4 - CIVIL UNIONS

Civil Unions are not marriage, they are not even close to marriage. Marriage provides 1,600 legal protections while civil unions provide only 500, and those stop at the state border.

The word “marriage” carries its own protections; people know and respect the meaning of the word. We cannot have all the protections of marriage and call it something else, because it would be something else.

Marriage is the gateway, built over generations, for couples to access our legal system.

5 - ELECTION

We are a nation of laws, not referenda, when it comes to protecting basic human rights.

Exit polls showed that 60% of voters supported some form of legal protections for same-sex couples.

Terrorism and the Iraq war were the reasons George Bush won the election, not same-sex marriage. The President improved his vote among regular churchgoers by only 1%, while increasing his support among non-churchgoers by 4%.

6 - CHURCH

40% of marriages today are secular and non-religious in nature.

Religious institutions will never be required to perform ceremonies with which they disagree. For example, the Catholic Church is not required to recognize 2nd, 3rd or even 4th marriages, while state law still recognizes such marriages.

Procreation has never been used as a litmus test for obtaining a marriage license.

Many churches perform same-sex marriages. In denying the recognition of those marriages, the government is selecting one religious viewpoint over another. That is an assault on religious freedom and on our nation.

There is a clear difference between the freedom to marry and the religious rite of marriage. When government tries to influence the “sanctity” of marriage, it blurs the line of separation between church and state.

The history of marriage is a history of change. A generation ago, most Americans opposed interracial marriages. Laws have changed over time to ensure liberty and freedom for all Americans.