

Defending Marriage: Why We Can't Settle for 'Civil Unions'

By David Smith and Peter LaBarbera

Citizens across America continue to react definitively to the Massachusetts Supreme Court's bizarre declaration that homosexual "marriage" is somehow a civil right. In response, citizen ballot initiatives in 18 states have mandated the amendment of state constitutions specifically defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Kansas is the latest state to do so, passing a constitutional marriage amendment by an overwhelming margin of 70-30 percent. In fact, these amendments have passed with an average of 70.3 percent of the vote. Only Michigan (59) and Oregon (57) — received less than 60 percent of the vote. A ballot initiative to add a marriage amendment has never failed at the polls.

Polls in every part of the union demonstrate the public's overwhelming support for protecting (traditional) marriage. Despite the pressure of radical homosexual activists, and their allies in Hollywood and the liberal media, Americans recognize the wisdom of protecting this sacred institution. Yes, marriage has been under attack for decades now, thanks to no-fault divorce laws and a greater cultural tolerance of sex outside marriage—and our families have suffered. This, however, is no reason to completely abandon traditional marriage, which is the single most important building block of any civil society.

While the momentum to safeguard marriage is encouraging, some equally dangerous alternatives are being floated by secular conservatives and naïve pro-family leaders and legislators. The "feel good" compromise they are offering is different from marriage only by name. Make no mistake, "civil unions" or "domestic partnerships" will destroy our culture, faith, values and traditions just as quickly as giving up marriage will. We cannot, should not, and will not settle for these alternatives. If homosexual relationships acquire marital-type status in the law, several things will occur:

- ✓ **The government will promote and protect unhealthy homosexual behavior.** No reputable health professional will honestly tell you that a lifetime of sodomy is good for the body. Health care professionals testify to the extreme and even lethal medical consequences resulting from promiscuous "gay" sex. Homosexual men suffer from sexually transmitted diseases at a rate far disproportional to their small numbers. Law enforcement officials will tell you how widespread the problems of domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse are among homosexuals. No compromise should promote dangerous public policies just because it is politically expedient.
- ✓ **Your medical insurance premiums would increase.** Homosexual behavior, in medical terms, is a high-risk lifestyle. "Civil unions" and "domestic partnership" laws would require that employers provide medical benefits to homosexual partners just as they do for married couples. Medical expenses would certainly rise as insurance companies would have to provide coverage for both the "gay" employee and his/her partner. Think about it: from 1981 through 1999, there were 751,965 cumulative reported cases of AIDS in the U.S. At least 56% of the AIDS diagnoses occurred in gay or bisexual men (**in other words, 1-3% of the population had at least 56% of those reported AIDS diagnoses**). The number of people in the U.S. that are HIV+ has continued to grow—including women who are victimized by their husband or boyfriend engaging in homosexual behavior on the "down low" (secretly). There are approximately 42,000 Americans infected with HIV each year (74% men, 26% women). Should society have to bear the cost of behavior that's medically dangerous - cutting short lives of homosexual men and heterosexual women?
- ✓ **School children will be taught to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle.** Public school children are already at the mercy of liberal administrators and teachers who promote the homosexual agenda and its related behaviors (e.g., transsexuality, or gender confusion) wherever and whenever they can. In Massachusetts, where counterfeit "gay marriages" were legalized by 4-3 vote in the state's Supreme Judicial Court, teachers are now emboldened to discuss homosexuality (and even "gay" sex) in public school classrooms. In the wake of the legalization of "gay marriage," one 8th-grade Massachusetts teacher justified teaching her students about the specifics of lesbian sex—in response to questions from students about homosexual practices.

- ✓ **Taxpayers will be forced to subsidize homosexual relationships**, which would receive the government's imprimatur (and possibly "protected class" status in the law). Government institutions—including public schools—will face escalating pressures to institute "domestic partner" coverage for homosexual employees and their "spouses." Government should reward marriage and healthy behavior; taxpayers shouldn't be forced to subsidize dangerous and wrong behaviors.
- ✓ **Homosexual adoptions would escalate**. All children are products of heterosexuality, and as such should be raised by both a mother and a father whenever possible. No child should have to be raised in an intentionally fatherless or motherless household due to an adult's lifestyle choice. Legalizing "civil unions" would put the state in the position of officially recognizing unnatural relationships, thus erasing society's legal preference for normal, married households. Teen pregnancies and divorce have made fatherlessness a serious problem in our society; shall we add to this problem and also create a generation of children who are raised without a mother?
- ✓ **Churches and pulpits will be silenced**. Can you imagine certain portions of your Bible being blacked out? Can you envision the day when your pastor, priest or rabbi is told by the government that he cannot teach that homosexuality is sinful? "Civil union" or "domestic partnership" laws would take us further down the slippery slope of an "official" U.S. government viewpoint on "sexual orientation" (homosexuality). Already, homosexual activists falsely characterize religious opposition to their behavior as "hateful" and "homophobic." Once the government starts awarding comprehensive marital-type benefits to aberrant relationships, it will further stigmatize traditional viewpoints on this subject. One day, it could be considered a "hate-crime" to speak out against homosexuality, as is the current trend in Canada and Europe. Government recognition and subsidization of homosexual relationships opens the door to attacks and intimidation against any church or group that takes a Biblical stand on marriage and homosexuality.
- ✓ **Landlords and employers will face crippling lawsuits**. Business owners and landlords could be sued and possibly prosecuted for exercising their privilege to refuse to hire, do business with or lease property to those who violate their moral standards. Businesses that decline to recognize non-marital relationships will increasingly be punished through loss of contracts and even legal action. This is already occurring in California and in Canada.

Non-marital relationships should not be legitimized or recognized by any government body—local, state or federal. A compromise of this sort would be disastrous, as it would undo all the work that has been done to safeguard marriage. All the legal privileges ascribed to normal couples would certainly be credited to homosexual couples, and then these steps would be used to justify full legal "gay marriage," anyway. Once the standard of one-man, one-woman marriage is broken, there is no logical stopping point. Other groups, such as bisexuals and polygamists, will demand the right to redefine marriage to suit their own proclivities. (So-called "polyamorists" are already pursuing legal recognition of their "loving" multi-partner relationships.)

The cost to society of government-forced acceptance of homosexual relationships on a par with marriage is far too great, as it will affect what our children are taught in school, adoption laws, medical insurance premiums, and the freedom of small business owners and churches to live by their own moral creeds. *Our* civil right to object to homosexuality is in jeopardy, as the entire country could be forced to fully accept unnatural unions and families. We know homosexuals can change, as evidenced by the testimonies of thousands of "ex-gays." Therefore this debate is not about "civil rights" but whether the government should sanction changeable, wrong and unhealthy behavior.

For the well-being of children and of society, we must not allow the creation of government-imposed counterfeit "marriage" by any name. Marriage and family are the bedrock of healthy civilizations. We tamper with them at our own peril.

David Smith is Senior Policy Analyst and Peter LaBarbera is Executive Director of Illinois Family Institute.

The Illinois Family Institute (IFI) is an independent 501c(3) non-profit organization dedicated to championing and re-affirming Biblical morals and values within our rapidly changing culture. IFI works within the state of Illinois to defend marriage, family, decency and the sanctity of life. **To sign up for IFI's FREE weekly e-mail updates, go to www.illinoisfamily.org or call IFI's office at: 630-790-8370 (800-FAMILY-1). E-mail: info@illinoisfamily.org.**