

Why Libertarians Should Oppose Same-Sex Marriage

By Maggie Gallagher

Ron Paul, the de facto head of the libertarian wing of the GOP, has argued it is a state's right to define marriage as it chooses. Here's the case for why states should choose to support the traditional understanding of marriage and repeal same-sex marriage.

1. Government did not create marriage and has no business redefining it.

Government did not create marriage and has no business redefining it. Government's job is to protect marriage and help it fulfill its unique mission, not change its meaning to accommodate the latest politically correct notion.

The government has been involved in marriage because marriage has been seen as key to protecting children – both by preventing out of wedlock births and by encouraging mothers and fathers to stay together and raise children.

That this is the state's interest in marriage was not an argument made up in order to oppose gay marriage; to the contrary, it has been repeatedly expressed explicitly by courts, it is the explicit reason the majorities of state courts have rejected a right to same-sex marriage. If encouraging mothers and fathers for children is a key part of marriage's public purpose, then same-sex couples simply do not fit. They are not marriages and government should not force wider society, or third parties, to change their views on marriage to accommodate the views of the fashionable left.

All of us are free to live as we choose, none of us have the right to redefine marriage, which is a pre-political institution the government protects and supports because it is so key to the future of the whole society in terms of creating and protecting children.

2. When marriage declines, government expands.

We are currently facing a marriage crisis in this country. Redefining marriage is a bad idea in the middle of a crisis that is generating an expanding welfare state, creating huge tax burdens, and hurting children.

According to a study by economist Benjamin Scafidi, "The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce and Unwed Childbearing," the failure of traditional marriages to form or last cost the taxpayers at least \$112 billion each and every year.

Gay people are not responsible for this family fragmentation, of course. But asking government to step in and redefine marriage is a risky experiment in a time when we should be reinforcing to the next generation that children need a mother and father.

3. Gay marriage has no economic benefits.

Gay marriage advocates have repeatedly claimed that gay marriage will lead to an economic boom (or conversely that traditional understandings of marriage will cost jobs). Four of the top five states in GDP growth all have constitutional amendments defining marriage, according to the census bureau. While only six states have same-sex marriage, of the fifteen states with the worst business environment for small business, fully five have gay marriage.

The *Washington Blade* recently admitted that predictions of revenue from gay marriage in D.C. were simply off the mark.

4. The Slope Really Is Slippery

If libertarians accept the premise that redefining marriage is a basic “freedom” or an individual right, then libertarians would be required to accept all people’s definitions of marriage, not just gay people or liberals’ understanding of marriage. It is hard to understand why anyone should not have the freedom to marry as they choose, whether it is polygamously or polyamorously.

Marriage loses its shape and purpose by being transformed into an individual freedom. If it is just a private and personal decision the logic leads not to gay marriage, but to the abolition of marriage as a legal status.

Libertarians should not support this latter outcome, because the costs to children, taxpayers and society of the breakdown of marriage are just too large.

Everyone has the right to live as we choose. The rights to live with the person we love, and to raise our natural children, are protected already under the federal constitution. ■

