

Pro-Family Group Launches \$1.5 Million Ad Campaign to Oppose Gay Marriage

✖ **April 8, 2009** – A day after Vermont became the first state to legalize gay marriage by legislative act, a pro-family group launched a \$1.5 million ad campaign to highlight how same-sex marriage undermines the religious liberties of traditional marriage supporters.

The National Organization for Marriage (NOM) began airing the one-minute TV spots today in select cities nationwide as part of the Two Million for Marriage campaign, an effort to mobilize 2 million traditional marriage advocates by 2010. (View “A Gathering Storm” ad.)

“If you embed within the law that those of us that believe that marriage is the union of a man and a woman are the equivalent of bigots, then the law is going to treat us that way, and we know that’s not true,” NOM executive director Brian Brown told *Charisma*.

“We know that analogy is false. ... Marriage is a fundamental social good, about bringing men and women together. And we need to stand up and support it, and we need to not let that simple, positive, true idea be treated in the law as the equivalent of discrimination.”

The NOM campaign comes just a day after the Vermont State House overrode a veto from Gov. James Douglas to pass a bill that allows gay couples to marry, making Vermont the fifth state to legalize gay marriage. The California Supreme Court’s gay marriage ruling was overturned in November.

Although the bill easily reached the two-thirds majority

needed to override the governor's veto in the Senate, it passed by only one vote in the House.

On the same day as the Vermont vote, the D.C. Council voted unanimously to recognize gay marriages performed in other states, with a final vote expected to be issued in May. Just days earlier, Iowa's Supreme Court struck down a law that barred homosexuals from marrying, making it the most conservative state to allow same-sex unions.

Traditional marriage advocates urged states to pass marriage amendments, saying the battle over marriage will likely spread to other states and may even reach the federal level. "Time and again, we see when citizens have the opportunity to vote at the ballot box, they consistently opt to support traditional marriage," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.

The federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman and protects states from having to recognize same-sex unions. But President Obama has expressed support for repealing the law, and pro-family leaders worry that similar DOMA laws active in more than 40 states could be struck down by activist judges, as was the case in Iowa.

"The challenge to DOMA is coming in Congress, it's just a question of timing," Brown said. "It may not be within the next few months, but we have to be organized now because that is the one law that protects all of these states that have already spoken through the democratic process" and passed marriage amendments.

Bishop Harry Jackson, founder of the Maryland-based High Impact Leadership Coalition, is setting up an office in the District of Columbia and launching a grass-roots campaign to oppose a gay marriage bill he said will likely be introduced in the District within the next 60 to 90 days.

Because the U.S. Congress governs the District, such a move would be a direct challenge to DOMA. Jackson, who is black, said educating African-American and Hispanic pastors in particular about gay marriage efforts will be key in preserving traditional marriage.

"In November, we had three simultaneous, major victories," Jackson said, referring to the passage of marriage amendments in Florida, Arizona and California. "We saw that the church uniting around racial boundaries is what makes the difference. ... When people who know the Lord know the issues, then we find people voting the right way."

Pro-family leaders say the vote in Vermont, which in 2000 became the first state to create civil union laws that gave same-sex couples the federal benefits of marriage, is proof that the debate over gay marriage was not about legal benefits.

"That was merely the wedge to demand more, to require that everyone in society accept what cannot-by nature-be, that marriage can be something other than one man and one woman," said Wendy Wright, president of Concerned Women for America.

Austin R. Nimocks, senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund, which has argued in court on behalf of traditional marriage supporters, said civil union laws are tools to usher in gay marriage nationally.

"This move [in Vermont] also demonstrates without question that 'civil unions' are never acceptable middle ground," Nimocks said. "Instead, they are the groundwork used to pave the way toward what you see today. Other states should not be naïve."

With the U.S. divorce rate at 50 percent and out-of-wedlock births increasing, Jackson said protecting America's "fractured, fragmented family structure that is hanging on for dear life" is what's at the center of the gay marriage debate.

Nimocks said research shows that children need both a mother and a father. "When children are denied a mom and a dad, it leads to far more drug use, early sexual activity, criminal activity, mental depression, suicide, and problems in school," he said. "The issue is bigger than a 'personal relationship.' How can we justify hurting an untold number of children for the possible emotional benefit of a very small number of adults?"

Forty-three states have laws prohibiting same-sex marriages, and 30 have passed marriage amendments. But lawmakers in New Hampshire and Maine are currently considering gay marriage bills. And Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, which successfully lobbied to legalize same-sex marriage in Massachusetts and Connecticut, has set a goal of legalizing gay marriage in all New England states by 2012.

The NOM spots started airing today in Iowa and New England states including New Jersey, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.