

The Battle for Marriage Continues

✖ Last Tuesday my organization, the High Impact Leadership Coalition, held an open-air rally in D.C. to oppose a same-sex marriage reciprocity bill, which is currently being pushed through the D.C. city council. Several hundred concerned citizens—including more than 100 pastors—attended because they felt their opinions were not being heard. Many felt that the bill had been surreptitiously advanced.

Last week's rally was the beginning of what may become the ultimate battle for marriage in our nation. By the end of the week four major events had happened. First the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) held a major press conference announcing their "No Offense" campaign with Carrie Prejean featured in their presentation. The campaign will help the average American see that there is reverse persecution already occurring in our great nation. For example, photographers in New Mexico were hauled before the state human rights commission because they choose not to photograph same-sex weddings.

Second gay activists began running television ads calling Carrie Prejean a "religious bigot." Third more than 100 ordained ministers from the decided to purchase a full-page ad that will appear in The Examiner, a Capitol Hill newspaper, the day of the next legislative meeting on May 5.

Finally last week was the first time a coherent voice was able to state displeasure with the bill. Many denominational streams and ethnic groups worked together hand-in-glove. Most of the spiritual leaders who worked with me were surprised

that the majority of the community's churchgoing population was barely aware of the proposed law and its ramifications.

The bill is scheduled for a final vote. If fully ratified, it then moves to the Congress for review. The review could be as short as 30 days, if the bill is uncontested. This means that a national congressional debate on gay marriage could begin as soon as this month. Naturally, such a debate would draw citizens from around the nation to contact their congressman.

So where do we go from here? First we must develop a legal strategy to keep this bad law from being set into motion. Many groups are qualified to deal with this including the Alliance Defense Fund, American Center for Law and Justice and Liberty Counsel. Their work must be rapidly coordinated, synthesized and implemented.

Second churches must contact their political leaders. In D.C. the Missionary Baptist churches are leading the way with a postcard campaign, calling for a vote from the people to decide on this important issue. Other groups, such as the Progressive Baptists, are mobilizing. Hopefully the Southern Baptists, who have a strong lobbying influence, will stand up and be counted. Nationally church headquarters from every denomination must start a letter writing and lobbying campaign to key congressmen.

Until now church activism has rarely been multiracial and multiethnic. Yet the recent victories of marriage amendments in Arizona, California, and Florida have demonstrated a new model for moral and political engagement. As part of this new unified approach, black churches must communicate with the Congressional Black Caucus. Hispanic leaders must also contact the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

Finally there must be grassroots mobilization and education. The most affective blocking mechanism to foil the advances of gay marriage has been informed grassroots voters, especially

when they threaten to throw politicians out of office.

There have been 29 votes in states across the country as to whether gay marriage should be legalized. In every vote, the people have reaffirmed their support for traditional marriage, rejecting the prospect of legalizing gay marriage. The important reasons why a majority of voters oppose same-sex marriage often do not get fully reported and discussed during a contentious campaign, where the news reports tend to be of the "he said, she said" variety.

Supporters of same-sex marriage have recently begun to frame their case by saying that religions should not be forced to solemnize any marriages that are inconsistent with their faith, but that the state should grant civil marriages to all in the name of equality. They claim that you can separate civil marriages from religious marriages cleanly and simply. But you can't.

For the vast majority of our citizenry, marriage does have spiritual elements that cannot be easily ignored. The institution of marriage, which predates our country by thousands of years, brings together the two halves of humanity to form mutual sacred commitments. This has been taught by virtually every faith to every generation of humankind.

Now because gay activists have succeeded for the first time in making marriage a political issue, we are being told to put aside thousands of years of history and the teachings of almost every faith community and simply accept same-sex marriage in the words of San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom "whether you like it or not."

Over 300 gay-affirming clergy will descend on Washington for two lobbying days, May 4-5. They intend to let their voices be heard in the halls of Congress, advocating for every piece of legislation that zeroes in on gay interests. This same group will undoubtedly make major campaign contributions along with

their requests for help. These kinds of lobbying efforts mean that biblically faithful churchgoers and conservatives must engage more than ever before. We cannot just assume that since the majority of citizens believe like us that our elected officials will simply do the right thing. We must let our voice be heard loud and clear ... now!

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