

The Roller Coaster Battle for Marriage

Last week was momentous in the battle for marriage in the U.S. It was a little like riding a roller coaster. On Tuesday, the D.C. City Council finished their first of two readings of their proposed same-sex marriage law. The reading passed by a margin of 11 to 2. The council seems determined to prevent the people from voting on this issue. Their rationale is that “civil rights” is not something that should be voted on by the masses. One councilman, who represents a strong, pro-marriage ward, looked visibly shaken. He spoke with a quavering voice. Ironically Harry Thomas, Jr., son of a former city council member, stated that he would not allow anyone in his ward to be “disenfranchised.” Undoubtedly, he meant to say that he did not want anyone to experience discrimination.

Disenfranchisement, however, is exactly what is happening to the average voter in D.C. The council feels that it has a right to vote on this issue, but it will not allow the citizens to vote. They also chafe at the fact that the District does not have a genuine vote on the Hill – it only has a shadow congresswoman. Sadly, there was only voice for democratic justice on the council – Marion Barry. The former mayor correctly told the group that the city council had not gone far enough in allowing liberty and true democracy to have their way. As a result of the fact the city is “deeply divided,” he announced that he would be working for a popular vote on the issue.

History and national polls suggest that a popular vote in D.C. could land conjugal marriage between a man and a woman in the win column. Therefore, same-sex marriage proponents in the city will put up every obstacle they can to prevent a popular vote. Importantly, even if a same-sex marriage law is passed, it can be overturned. Just like the powerful grassroots

battles in Maine and California, outraged D.C. citizens can turn the marriage picture around.

Yellow journalism has replaced objective reporting in many corners of the region. Some writers have been bold enough to suggest that 80 percent of white voters support same-sex marriage in D.C. If true, such a number would place D.C. politically somewhere left of San Francisco. (To the contrary, private polling that I have seen confirms Marion Barry's "gut feel" about the issue.) Regardless of which poll is cited, same-sex marriage advocates are not about to risk a 32nd defeat at the hands of an unpredictable electorate.

Others have written about apathy on the part of the D.C. electorate on this issue. *The Washington Post* has gone out of its way to suggest that the faith community is equally divided over the issue of marriage.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Even in D.C., clergy who support same-sex marriage are far from the mainstream. How could it be otherwise? Most faith traditions around the world do not celebrate same-sex marriage. The Manhattan Declaration, which I have written about in previous pieces, unites Christians from most denominations to stand for pro-life, pro-marriage and pro-religious liberties.

The House of Representatives, if it chooses to, can veto D.C. laws. For this reason, openly gay city council members are "briefing" friendly Congressmen on the Hill this week. At the same time, pro-traditional marriage advocates will address scores of representatives. Could this be the beginning of the federal battle over DOMA – the Defense of Marriage Act? In addition, Stand For Marriage leaders are stopped everywhere they go in the city by people who repeatedly declare, "We are behind you!"

As the political pot in Washington slowly rises to a boil, there certainly have been other significant developments in

the marriage battle around the nation. On Wednesday, for example, opponents of gay marriage won a decisive victory in the New York State Senate; a measure attempting to legalize same-sex marriage was defeated 38 to 24. The liberal state legislature once considered gay marriage passage inevitable – with the same level of certainty that D.C. Council members currently display. In fact, David A. Paterson was poised to sign it into law.

Maggie Gallagher, president of the National Organization for Marriage, believes that New York State represents a game changer in the marriage wars. “I think you put it all together and it most likely spells the end of the idea that you can pass gay marriage democratically anywhere else in the United States,” she told reporters. This implies that gay marriage advocates will have to rely on activist judges and the legal system to advance their agenda.

Last week, I was interviewed by U.S. News and World Report and asked an interesting question: “What lessons can Christian conservatives take from the loss they received at the hands of the D.C. Council?” I said that we needed to complement our grassroots organizational success with an increase in political sophistication. This means we need to start earlier in order to apply the same kind of pressure that gays have done for over five years. Although the opposition’s efforts made an impact on the mayor’s office and the D.C. Council, it has not changed the opinion of the mass voters in the District. Our efforts will be seen in the upcoming elections when we watch the current council members lose due to their disregard for the people whom they serve. In fact, we will strive to find our own candidates for these positions.

Become an advocate for marriage. E-mail your congressmen and senators and let them know how you want them to vote. Go to [www.nymarriage.com](#) and learn more about how you can help. Today, you can make a difference!