

Unequal Marriages

✖ Last Tuesday an early morning e-mail alert was sent to gay activists instructing them to secure seats in the D.C. City Council chambers. The activists were aware that our local coalition of ministers and churches were planning to attend the meetings to hear the final vote on a same-sex reciprocity bill which, if ratified, would allow marriages performed in other jurisdictions to be acknowledged in D.C.

To my delight, members of our coalition filled the regular chambers and a large overflow room with observers. I was also fortunate enough to sit on the front row. Our goal was to put the council on notice that the sleeping giant had awakened. Even though the council surreptitiously passed the bill, we were declaring by our presence, that we were going to fight same-sex marriages originating in D.C. In addition, we were stating that we would go to Capitol Hill to fight this reciprocity measure.

Many of the Capital's leading pastors and spiritual fathers, came to the meeting or to Freedom Plaza, just opposite City Hall. For three hours singers sang worship choruses and civil rights anthems. The singing and praying were periodically punctuated by fiery preaching by pastors from some of the city's largest and most respected churches. The outside rally concluded with a religious wedding ceremony, which I performed, as a symbolic act celebrating the sanctity of marriage for both D.C. and the nation.

Despite the spiritual fervor being exhibited on Freedom Plaza, the mood of the city council was not quite as celebrative. They passed the measure despite our full-page ad in the local paper, our group's numerous letters to the council and direct meetings with the council members. They declared that gay

marriage would someday be the law in D.C. because it was the will of the people, though we have polling information that states the contrary.

I was taken aback by the boldness of the council and their declarations. The voting process went according to schedule until former D.C. mayor and now ward eight councilman, Marion Barry, asked for the matter to be discussed. In deference to Barry an open discussion was held. Several openly gay council members attempted to paint themselves as victims of discrimination and numerous oppressive requirements. This discussion culminated with councilman David Catania calling Barry a "bigot" because Barry changed his mind about his vote on the bill.

Catania purposely used the phrase marriage equality instead of same-sex marriage. This phrase may have proven to be more acceptable with focus groups and people who are contemplating the merits of gay marriage. Nowhere in the council member's discussion was mention made that same-sex marriage changes the definition of family, parenting and education in our city in one fell swoop. Future concepts of family, marriage and sex will be communicated differently because of such legislation. Neither was it mentioned that books like the *King and the King*, *Heather has Two Mommies* or similar works will eventually be required reading for 8-year-olds in the District. And I can't imagine what sex education classes will include in order to "prepare" teenagers for responsible entry into the adult world.

Nothing was said about the devaluation of marriage that has happened in every nation where same-sex unions have received comparable status to heterosexual marriage. According to the work of Harvard trained Stanley Kurtz, Ph.D., as well as others, rapid destabilization of the entire institution of marriage has been an unintended consequence of recognizing same-sex marriages.

Instead of using meaningful conversation, councilman Catania resorted to name calling when he declared that Marion Barry was a bigot. To Barry's credit, the civil rights warhorse repudiated the bigot label. Catania quickly apologized. Instead he implied that bigotry is the only reason that explains why thinking Americans oppose same-sex marriage. On the heels of this encounter, another council member began to describe some of the pastors as "mean-spirited" and "intimidated."

The next step for us is simple – we must lobby congress to veto this bill. Further more Christians must begin alerting their Democratic and Republican congressmen about the need to vote against such measures. An immediate response from our supporters is very necessary.

Consider the following steps of action:

1. I am asking citizens to join me for three days of lobbying starting May 20-22 in Washington, D.C. We will bring over 300 ministers to D.C. for three days of inspiration, information and impartation. This group will take time to lobby Congress and conduct prayer vigils in the city.
2. I am also asking that every pastor and ministry leader notify their U.S. senators and representatives and tell them that we are expecting them to veto this bill.
3. Finally I'm asking every American who understands the importance of protecting traditional marriage to pray every day for the legislators to realize the negative impact same-sex marriage legislation will have on our society.

The time to act is now. Let's not be caught sleeping on our watch!

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an MBA from Harvard, is a best-selling author and popular conference speaker. He leads the High-Impact Leadership Coalition.