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WHY MARRIAGE? JUST THE FACTS REAL STORIES COMMUNITIES SUPPORTERS GET ENGAGED! DONATE



WHY MARRIAGE?

Marriage says "We are family" in a way that no other word does.

- Marriage is one of the few times where people make a public promise of love and responsibility for each other and ask our friends and family to hold us accountable.
- Gay and lesbian couples may seem different from straight couples, but we share similar values - like the importance of family and helping out our neighbors; worries - like making ends meet or the possibility of losing a job; and hopes and dreams - like finding that special someone to grow old with, and standing in front of friends and family to make a lifetime commitment.

It's as basic as the Golden Rule.

- Treating others as one would want to be treated includes allowing marriage for gay couples who are truly committed to each other.
- Most straight couples would never want someone telling them they couldn't marry, and when they think about it, many say they wouldn't want to deny that for anyone else.

In America, freedom means freedom for everybody.

- Marriage is a fundamental freedom that should not be denied to anyone.
- We should protect, not limit individual freedoms.

Marriage strengthens families. It gives couples the tools and the security to build a life together and to protect their families.

- Couples get married because they want to be there for each other in sickness and in health, when times are good and when things get tough. State and federal marriage laws provide a safety net of legal and economic protections for married couples and their children - including the ability to visit your spouse in the hospital and to transfer property, which can mean being able to remain in the family home when your spouse has passed away.
- There have been attempts to create marriage-like relationship systems, but they don't provide the same security and protections.
- Allowing committed gay and lesbian couples to get married does not change the meaning of marriage.
- All couples who marry in the United States must get a license for a civil marriage, usually at a courthouse or city hall. These civil marriages would also be available to same-sex couples.
- Civil marriage for gay couples does not affect religious marriages, religious institutions or clergy in any way. No religion would be forced to marry same-sex couples, or recognize same-sex marriages within the context of their religious beliefs.
- What defines a marriage is love and commitment, and the ability to protect your family.

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MAYORS FOR THE FREEDOM TO MARRY

Mayors for the Freedom to Marry is a broad-based and nonpartisan group of mayors who pledge to support marriage for same-sex couples because denying anybody the freedom to marry the person that they love is harmful to our families, hurts our communities economically, and does not fulfill the Golden Rule of treating our neighbors as we wish to be treated.

Mayors for the Freedom to Marry is a project of Freedom to Marry launched at the U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting in January of 2012 with about 80 Mayors. Three year earlier the Conference had unanimously approved a resolution stating that: "The U.S. Conference of Mayors supports marriage equality for same-sex couples, and the recognition and extension of full equal rights to such unions, including family and medical leave, tax equity, and insurance and retirement benefits, and opposes the enshrinement of discrimination in the federal or state constitutions."

Today there are almost 400 Mayors for the Freedom to Marry from 38 states and the District of Columbia. These Mayors hail from culturally, racially and geographically diverse cities and many of the mayors represent cities in states where marriage is not yet a reality. There are presently seven chairs of Mayors for the Freedom to Marry, including Mayors Julian Castro of San Antonio, Kevin Faulconer of San Diego, Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles, Annise Parker of Houston, Michael Nutter of Philadelphia, Kasim Reed of Atlanta and Greg Stanton of Phoenix.

Last year, Freedom to Marry relaunched the program with the "Light Up the Map" Campaign. The centerpiece of the campaign is a revamped web page with an interactive map that highlights the cities currently represented by Mayors for the Freedom to Marry, identifies key cities where Mayors are not yet a part of the campaign, and provides a call to action that makes it easy for supporters to urge their mayors to join. The map is designed to facilitate more active engagement on marriage among everyday people and their mayors. The goal of the campaign is to reach mayors in all 50 states.

The voices of Mayors' publicly in support of the freedom to marry have been crucially important in the progress to date, and will continue to be important in the future. You can find more information about Mayors for the Freedom to Marry at <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/map>.

If you are a Mayor who would like to join the Mayors who share one important value: a common commitment to fairness, signing up is easy at <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/mayors>.



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MAYORS

FOR THE

FREEDOM TO MARRY

OUR THANKS TO

Sue Lynn
Anna Maria

David Coviello
Biscayne Park

Barbara Sharief
Broward County

Lisa Aronson
Coconut Creek

Judy Paul
Davie

Russ Barley
Freeport

Joy Cooper
Hallandale Beach

Claire Schubert
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ELECTED OFFICIALS GUIDE

HOW TO SUPPORT

THE FREEDOM TO MARRY

“Over the course of several years, as I talked to friends and family and neighbors; when I think about members of my own staff who are incredibly committed, in monogamous... same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together; when I think about those soldiers or airmen or marines or sailors who are out there fighting on my behalf and yet feel constrained... because they’re not able to commit themselves in a marriage...
I think same-sex couples should be able to get married.”

President Barack Obama, May 9, 2012



THE CENTER OF GRAVITY HAS SHIFTED TO SUPPORT FOR THE FREEDOM TO MARRY



A solid and rapidly diversifying majority of the American public now supports the freedom to marry.

- When DOMA passed in 1996, only 27% of Americans supported marriage for same-sex couples. Today, **58% support the freedom to marry.**
- **Support is accelerating rapidly.** Support rose about 1% annually between 1996 and 2009 – but in 2010 and 2011, it shot up 5% per year.
- **Support is increasing across key demographic sectors** including seniors, Catholics, Hispanics, African Americans, and Republicans.
- **Over 43% of the U.S. population now lives in a state in which same-sex couples receive some form of legal recognition** – including over 30% who live in jurisdictions with full marriage recognition or which honor out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples. Before 1997, there was no state-level relationship recognition at all.
(See Appendix for current state status.)

Political support is growing across the spectrum – from President Obama to the grassroots.

- From grassroots communities to **Mayors for the Freedom to Marry** and state legislators to President Obama, there is a groundswell of support on this issue.
- While most of the leadership for the freedom to marry has come from Democrats, support is now increasingly provided by Republicans as well. Freedom to marry legislation was passed in New York in 2011 by a **Republican-controlled Senate**. A repeal attempt in New Hampshire in early 2012 was rejected by a **majority of Republican legislators**.
- In 2011, President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder concluded that DOMA, the so-called Defense of Marriage Act, is **unconstitutional and therefore indefensible**.
- The bill to overturn DOMA, the **Respect for Marriage Act**, has won more cosponsors in the 112th Congress than ever, with a first-ever Senate introduction, hearing, and passage out of the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee.

“The remarkable surge over the last two years can’t be explained by generational change alone. It suggests that **people across the political spectrum are rethinking their positions—and deciding in favor of the freedom to marry.**”

Republican pollster

Dr. Jan van Lohuizen,

July 2011

AMERICANS CAN RELATE TO LEADERS WHOSE FEELINGS HAVE EVOLVED



Americans respect legislators who stand up and fight for the freedom to marry. And they can relate to leaders whose feelings on this issue have evolved over time from opposition or uncertainty to support.

“I voted for the Defense of Marriage Act. That is true. And others did as well. I won't use that as an explanation or excuse....When a former Congressman from Illinois named Abraham Lincoln was challenged because he changed his position on an issue... his explanation was very simple. He said, **'I'd rather be right some of the time than wrong all the time.'** That is why I'm an original cosponsor of Respect for Marriage Act.”

U.S. Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-IL)

“I didn't always support the right to marry, but like many people my position evolved. Several years ago I believed that civil unions were fair. The irony is I held this mistaken view even though my oldest daughter Lisa is a lesbian. But I was wrong. It seems that **each year more and more Americans are going through the same evolution that I did. I can assure you there's nothing to fear.**

“When I announced my support for gay marriage a few years ago, at the start of my mayoral campaign for the second term, I was expecting a lot of angry phone calls but very few came. Instead I heard from so many people, from gay and lesbian couples, from their families and friends and **fair-minded San Diego people who said thank you.**”

San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders (R)

Co-Chair, Mayors for the Freedom to Marry

Voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports the freedom to marry than a candidate who opposes it, with a full 79 % saying they prefer a candidate who supports the freedom to marry or it would not impact their vote.

NBC/Wall St. Journal poll, March 2012

STANDING FOR VALUES: HOW TO TALK ABOUT THE FREEDOM TO MARRY



Here are some useful ways to talk about the freedom to marry and same-sex couples:

- **Marriage matters to gay people in similar ways that it matters to everyone else.** Most committed couples—whether they are gay or straight—hope to marry for similar reasons: to publicly acknowledge their commitment to each other and to make a lifetime promise to care for and protect one another.
- **Marriage recognizes the worth of all families.** Marriage strengthens families and provides the tools and security to build a life together. I believe in marriage and the good it offers society, and respect those who accept the commitment, protections, and responsibilities of marriage. Allowing same-sex couples to share that commitment does not diminish my marriage.
- **Marriage helps individuals to take care of their families by providing both protections and responsibilities.** Denied the freedom to marry, same-sex couples and their families are deprived of important legal and economic protections, as well as the emotional, social, and spiritual meaning that marriage has.
- **America is strongest when we support all our people fairly and build strong communities.** Because I believe in fairness for all American families, I support the freedom to marry for same-sex couples willing to take on that commitment.
- **It's as basic as the Golden Rule.** Treating others as we would want to be treated includes allowing gay couples who are committed to get married. I disagree with those who would use this question to divide the American people.

The majority of Americans believe in fairness toward their fellow citizens, and so do I.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. DON'T EMPHASIZE RIGHTS & BENEFITS

Emphasizing the injustice of excluding same-sex couples from the rights and benefits creates confusion, because it's not the way most people think about marriage.

2. DO EMPHASIZE JOINING, NOT CHANGING MARRIAGE

The terms "gay marriage" or "same-sex marriage" make people think that gay and lesbian couples are trying to create something different. Same sex couples want to join, not change, the institution of marriage.

3. DO TELL STORIES OF LOVE & COMMITMENT

By emphasizing shared values and telling the stories of gay and lesbian couples' love and commitment, we can help those who are conflicted or wavering to work through their questions and continue their journey toward support of the freedom to marry.

RESPONDING TO TOUGH QUESTIONS



What about the opposition and its arguments?

Opponents of the freedom to marry use scare tactics and play on people's uncertainties about change to perpetuate unfairness. Their claims simply do not hold up.

CLAIM:

"Civil union, domestic partnership, or other non-marriage alternatives for lesbian and gay couples are good enough."

FACT:

In times of emergency, the people on the front lines—hospital nurses and admitting rooms, police or EMTs, even the operators of funeral homes—don't really understand how civil union or domestic partnership works, which leads to couples being unable to care for each other.

- Look at the tragic case of Janice Langbehn, Lisa Pond and their family. While on vacation in Florida, Lisa had an aneurysm and died in a hospital. Janice and their children were not allowed to comfort Lisa and hold her hand in her final moments, because they were kept in the waiting room—despite providing all the legal documents the couple had prepared in advance.
- While these alternative mechanisms can provide same-sex couples with important responsibilities and protections previously withheld, legislatures in states where civil union/partnership was first enacted – such as Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Washington, and the District of Columbia – have all pushed past the separate mechanism to marriage itself.
- Think about it – people write songs about marriage. No one writes odes to domestic partnership. No one grows up dreaming of one day entering into a civil union.

CLAIM:

"With this economy, we need to focus on more pressing issues."

FACT:

Marriage for same-sex couples is a vital economic issue for individuals and communities.

- In these tough economic times, gay and lesbian couples share similar worries, like making ends meet, losing their jobs, or losing their health insurance. Marriage is an important part of building the security we all long for.
- Marriage for same-sex couples generates needed revenue for states as they struggle to balance budgets. Massachusetts saw a boost of \$111 million over five years. In Washington the freedom to marry is expected to generate over \$88 million in revenue over the next three years, including a \$5 million boost in tax revenue in the first year alone.

RESPONDING TO TOUGH QUESTIONS



CLAIM:

“Letting gay couples marry will weaken the institution of marriage.”

FACT:

Inclusion strengthens the institution of marriage. Marriage promotes stability, fidelity, and community. This holds true for same sex couples.

- Massachusetts, the first state to extend the freedom to marry to same-sex couples, maintains the lowest divorce rate in the U.S.
- In countries such as Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and the Netherlands marriage rates are up and divorce rates down since legalizing marriage for gay couples.
- Nearly 70% of Massachusetts voters believe the freedom to marry contributes to the common good because it encourages more people to build families and raise children. By a margin of 3-to-1 voters agree that the children of gay and lesbian couples are more secure with marriage.

CLAIM:

“Marriage is a religious institution; allowing same-sex couples to marry is a violation of religious liberties.”

FACT:

No church or clergy would be forced to marry any couple, including gay couples, outside their faith tradition (just as they need not allow divorced people to remarry, or perform a wedding of an interfaith couple, if they choose not to).

- At issue here are civil marriage licenses issued by the government which provide protections and responsibilities for the safety and security of families.
- Every year, at least 40% of heterosexual couples in the United States who get married do so without a church, synagogue, mosque or religious ceremony.
- There are a growing number of faith traditions that have accepted —and want to marry—gay and lesbian couples.

CLAIM:

“Homosexual marriage will be taught in public schools – whether parents like it or not.”

FACT:

- **Ending the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage is not about schools or curriculum**, but about whether committed same-sex couples can join in marriage. These claims are simply trying to divert attention away from the central issue, which is to make sure that all couples and families are treated fairly.
- **The freedom to marry protects children.** It guarantees that children of same-sex couples won't be treated any differently at school. It's painful and humiliating for children to be singled out or targeted and bullied for their differences, of any kind.

APPENDIX: CURRENT STATUS OF STATE RELATIONSHIP RECOGNITION



The number of U.S. states providing recognition to same-sex couples continues to grow.

Over 43% of the U.S. population now lives in a state in which same-sex couples receive some form of legal recognition :

- **Marriage for same-sex couples is now legal in 13 states** – Massachusetts (2004), Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), Vermont (2009), New Hampshire (2009), New York (2011), Maine (2012), Maryland (2012), Washington (2012), California, Delaware (2013), Minnesota (2013), Rhode Island (2013) – **and the District of Columbia** (2010), bringing the percentage of the U.S. population living in jurisdictions with the freedom to marry (or honoring out-of-state marriages of same-sex couples) to **over 30%**.
- Six states offer **broad legal protections** to same sex couples through civil union (New Jersey since 2007; Illinois since 2010; Hawaii since 2011; Colorado since 2013) and domestic partnership (Oregon since 2008, Nevada since 2009) and a seventh, Wisconsin, offers a more limited domestic partnership.
- The most populous state with over 12% of the U.S. population, **California legally married over 18,000 gay and lesbian couples** in 2008 following an equal protection ruling by the state Supreme Court. The freedom to marry was stripped away five months later in the infamous Prop 8 constitutional amendment but restored in an historic US Supreme Court ruling in 2013.

Over 43% of the U.S. population lives in a state with some form of state-level protection for same-sex relationships – whether marriage, explicit respect for out-of-state marriages, full domestic partnership or civil union, or more limited domestic partnerships. Before 1997 and the movement for the freedom to marry, there was no state-level relationship recognition at all.

Updated Sept. 2013

For current updates:

www.freedomtomarry.org/states

FOR MORE INFORMATION



SOURCE CITATIONS

Today, 58% support the freedom to marry. March, 2013 Washington Post/ ABC.
<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/03/poll-tracks-dramatic-rise-in-support-for-gay-marriage/>

A solid and rapidly diversifying majority of the American public now supports the freedom to marry.

2011 analysis of six national polls conducted by Joel Benenson, President of Benenson Strategy Group and lead pollster to President Barack Obama, and Dr. Jan van Lohuizen, President of Voter Consumer Research and former pollster to President George W. Bush.
http://freemarry.3cdn.net/5ae85613318ade1b2e_8dm6bna72.pdf

Voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports the freedom to marry than a candidate who opposes it.

NBC/ Wall Street Journal poll, March 2012
http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/MSNBC/Sections/A_Politics/Today_Stories_Teases/12202_March_NBC_WSJ.pdf

Useful ways to talk about the freedom to marry.

Freedom to Marry conducted expert analysis of over 75 studies from a half-dozen states, including polls and focus groups, campaign results, and academic research — assessing how both the general population and culturally-specific demographics felt about this issue. We combined this research with our experience working with leading partner organizations and rigorous field-testing.
<http://www.freetomarry.org/resources/movingmarriageforward>

Marriage for same-sex couples generates needed revenue for states as they struggle to balance budgets.

The Williams Institute at the UCLA Law School

Massachusetts, the first state to extend the freedom to marry to same-sex couples, maintains the lowest divorce rate in the U.S.

[Division of Vital Statistics](#), National Center for Health Statistics, CDC; 1990, 1995, 1999-2007

In countries such as Norway, Sweden, Iceland, and the Netherlands marriage rates are up and divorce rates down since legalizing marriage for gay couples.
When Gay People Get Married: What Happens When Societies Legalize Same-Sex Marriage, M.V. Lee Badgett, 2009

Nearly 70% of Massachusetts voters believe the freedom to marry contributes to the common good because it encourages more people to build families and raise children. By a margin of 3-to-1 voters agree that the children of gay and lesbian couples are more secure with marriage.

"Marriage Equality Works for Massachusetts: 5th Anniversary Voter Survey," Lake Research Partners; April 2009

Freedom to Marry is the campaign to win marriage nationwide.

We are pursuing our Roadmap to Victory by working to win the freedom to marry in more states, grow the national majority for marriage, and end federal marriage discrimination.

Freedom to Marry

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Take Action!

There are things you can do right now to advance the cause of equal rights and marriage.

- **Keep yourself and others informed** about recent developments in marriage equality by going to www.aclu-wa.org. It is often useful to utilize personal stories of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender couples when convincing others of the need for equal marriage rights.
- **Write a letter to the editor** of your local newspaper saying why you support legal marriages for same-sex couples and why a constitutional amendment against marriage equality is a bad idea.
- **Speak up** the next time you hear someone say marriage is only meant for heterosexual couples. If you hear this on a radio program, call in. If you hear it on TV, call or send an e-mail. If it comes up in conversation, state your views clearly and forcefully.
- **Host a house party** at which you can educate friends and family about marriage equality and raise funds for groups working on the cause. Invite a diverse group. Promote discussion and answer questions. Encourage them to write letters to Congress and to state

government officials about the issue. To organize an ACLU house party, contact field@aclu-wa.org.

- **Meet with clergy and other opinion leaders** in your community and ask them to join you in speaking out in support of marriage equality and against the Federal Marriage Amendment.
- **Join our e-mail activist network** at www.aclu-wa.org and stay informed about legislative developments on marriage equality.
- **Make a financial contribution** to support the ACLU of Washington.

Our Work in the Courts and the Community

- Nationwide, the ACLU has filed lawsuits challenging bans on marriage by same-sex couples in Oregon, California, New York, and Maryland.
- In Washington, the ACLU is pursuing a suit on behalf of 11 same-sex couples seeking to establish equal marriage rights statewide.
- The ACLU is a leading member of Equal Rights Washington, a statewide coalition of sexual minority organizations and allies.
- The ACLU has helped organize town hall meetings on equal marriage rights in communities across the state, including Olympia, Port Townsend, Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, and Yakima.
- ACLU representatives speak out frequently on the need for marriage equality in the mass media and in public forums have educated students about the issue in school classrooms.
- The ACLU has designed and distributed educational materials on marriage equality to thousands of people across Washington. Information is available on the ACLU of Washington website at www.aclu-wa.org.

Why Marriage Equality Matters



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Why should same-sex couples have the right to marry?

The right to get married is a fundamental right. As a fundamental right, it should be equally available to all citizens. The government should not deny two people the right to legal marriage just because they are of the same sex. That is discrimination and is contrary to American values of fair and equal treatment for all. Just like heterosexuals, many lesbians and gays grow up dreaming of meeting a partner and making a lifelong commitment to another person. They should not be denied pursuit of this portion of the American dream simply because they have a same-sex partner.

Aren't civil unions for same-sex couples good enough?

Unequal treatment is not acceptable. Civil unions do not provide the same rights, benefits, and obligations as civil marriage. There are over 1,000 federal rights and more than 350 rights and obligations in our state that protect married couples and their families, including:

- Social Security survivor and pension benefits
- Hospital visitation rights
- Medical decision-making rights
- Inheritance rights
- Family leave under the federal Family Medical Leave Act
- End-of-life decisions

How will granting marriage rights to same-sex couples affect families?

It will provide security and stability to families. According to the 2000 Census, there are more than a million children being raised by same-sex couples in the

Marriage:	Civil Unions:
States grant marriage licenses to couples.	States would grant civil union licenses to same-sex couples but marriage licenses to opposite-sex couples.
Couples have legal protections, rights, and responsibilities under state and federal law.	Couples receive legal protections, rights, and responsibilities under state law which are effective only when located in the state.
Couples are recognized as being married by the federal government and all state governments.	Civil unions are not recognized by other states or federal government.

While civil unions and domestic partnerships provide some concrete benefits for same-sex couples, they fall far short of the benefits provided under marriage laws. And if government were to make civil unions entirely equal, why devalue the relationship by refusing to call it marriage?

What about people who oppose granting marriage equality because of their religious beliefs?

Civil marriage involves a legal contract between two people. Equal access to legal marriage does not affect the right of religious institutions to decide whom they will marry. No church or religious organization will be required to perform a marriage ceremony for a same-sex couple, nor will anyone have to change their religious beliefs.

Hasn't the right to marry historically been limited to opposite-sex couples? Isn't this an important part of our cultural tradition?

Marriage equality arises from America's tradition of ending discriminatory treatment and erasing inequities of the past. The fact that laws have barred same-sex couples from marriage in the past does not mean it is right to continue doing so. The same argument – "This is tradition. This is the way it has always been ..." – was also used to support our now-discarded ban on marriage by interracial couples. American history is filled with examples of the enactment of new laws that extend legal rights to people previously treated unequally.

Marriage Equality USA

Why Marriage?

Isn't the bottom line that it's all about love? You meet someone, you fall in love, at some point you know you want to spend the rest of your life with this person, and then you want to share that with the other important people in your life. You want to make a statement regarding how you feel about each other - you want your family and friends to share in that - you want your community to recognize what the two of you mean to each other and to recognize the commitment you've made to each other.



However, in addition to the love and commitment, marriage offers many legal benefits and responsibilities that protect couple relationships and families. Marriage also confers a certain social status upon a relationship - marriage is something we are familiar with, it is something we understand. When one person is "married" to another we know what that means.

Below we discuss the difference between actual civil marriage and "marriage-lite" (civil unions and domestic partnerships). We also list a fraction of the practical reasons why marriage matters to couples who choose to marry.

Marriage Equality USA is working for full civil marriage at both the state and federal levels, for the people in every state in the country. One of the first things that became abundantly clear following the Supreme Court of the United States ruling in *United States v. Windsor*, the DOMA case, was that civil unions and domestic partnerships are unequivocally not equal to/the same as marriage. [OPM Says Same-Sex Civil Unions Will 'Remain Ineligible For Most Federal Benefits'](#) - courtesy of Towle Road, 9 July 2013. We thank Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders ([GLAD](#)) for their fact sheet [Civil Marriage v. Civil Unions, What's the difference? \(Updated January 2013\)](#).

Practical

Marriage offers 1,138 Federal benefits and responsibilities, not including hundreds more offered by every state.

- In times of crisis, spouses have hospital visitation rights and can make medical decisions in event of illness or disability of their spouse.
- Employers offer spouses sick leave, bereavement leave, access to health insurance and pension
- The law provides certain automatic rights to a person's spouse regardless of whether or not a will exists.
- Married couples in elderly care facilities are generally not separated unless one spouse's health dictates hospitalization or special care.
- The dissolution of a marriage requires a determination of property distribution, award of child custody and support and spousal support. Absent divorce, there is no uniform system for sorting out the ending of a relationship.

Finances

Financial issues are complex and challenging, no matter the couple. When home ownership, kids and other assets are a part of the equation, planning for the present and especially the future is even more critical for greater security.

- Married couples are permitted to give an unlimited amount of gifts to each other without being taxed.
- The law presumes that a married couple with both names on the title to their home owns the property as "tenants by the entirety."
- A married couple, by statute, has creditor protection of their marital home.
- Many married people are entitled to financial benefits relating to their spouses, such as disability, pension and social security benefits.
- With marriage, a couple has the right to be treated as an economic unit and to file joint tax returns (and pay the marriage penalty), and obtain joint health, home and auto insurance policies.
- When a spouse dies, there is no need to prove ownership of every item in the household for taxable purposes.

Protecting Children

- A child who grows up with married parents benefits from the fact that his or her parents' relationship is recognized by law and receives legal protections.
- Spouses are generally entitled to joint child custody and visitation upon divorce (and bear an obligation to pay child support).
- The mark of a strong family and healthy children is having parents who are nurturing, caring, and loving. Parents should be judged on their ability to parent, not by their age, race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Healthy Advantage

Studies show that people who are married tend to live longer and lead healthier lives.

- For adults, a stable, happy marriage is the best protector against illness and premature death. Decades of research have clearly established these links. (Burman & Margolin, 1992; Dawson, 1991; Verbrugge, 1979).
- Studies on marriages have found that married people live longer, have higher incomes and wealth, engage less in risky behaviors, eat more healthily, and have fewer psychological problems than unmarried people. (Waite, Linda J. "Why Marriage Matters." Strengthening Marriage Roundtable. Washington, DC, June 1997)
- Research shows that unmarried couples have lower levels of happiness and well-being than married couples. (Popenoe, David and Dafoe Whitehead, Barbara, USA Today, July, 2000) A recent study shows that denying same-sex couples the right to marry has a negative impact on their mental health.
- ***I Do, But I can't***: The impact of marriage denial on the mental health and sexual citizenship of lesbians and gay men in the United States (Herdt, G. & Kertzner, R. 2006).

Human Rights Campaign

Americans for Marriage Equality project

Love. Honor. Commitment. Three simple words. They are the words that gay and lesbian couples feel in their hearts when they make a commitment to each other. That's why the Human Rights Campaign believes that same-sex couples should be able to get married. Our campaign, Americans for Marriage Equality, is sparking a national conversation about the power of love, fairness and equality.

We are Americans for Marriage Equality.

The Impact

The Fight for Marriage Equality

Americans for Marriage Equality is a public engagement campaign featuring prominent Americans who support committed gay and lesbian couples getting married. The issue of marriage equality is at a critical time as it moves through electoral, legislative and judicial arenas. Find out more about the issue and stand on the side of equality.

A hallmark of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights movement is the fight to have our relationships recognized as equal under the law. Full marriage equality is the true measure of our success in this area.

Did you know?

- The [majority](#) of the American public — about 58% — supports marriage equality, according to a number of nonpartisan polls including Gallup, CNN, and Washington Post/ABC News. This is also reflected by growing support from diverse political, civic, and business leaders. [Read more about business leaders who support marriage equality.](#)
- 17 states and D.C. provide [marriage equality](#) to loving and committed same-sex couples. In 2000, that number was zero.
- Same-sex couples are only asking that the government legally recognize their marriage. No religion or religious leader is — or will be — required to marry an LGBT couple.
- LGBT couples and individuals are [loving, adoptive parents to more than 1 million children](#) who deserve the stability and economic security that having their parents recognized as married would bring.
- An estimated 3.1 million people in America live together in same-sex relationships.

What HRC is Doing to Help

HRC's poll conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research shows American support for equal marriage at 51 percent (43 percent in the Midwest and South). Despite the public's wide support of LGBT equality issues, there remains work to be done. Marriage equality, in particular, is at a critical time as it moves through electoral, legislative and judicial areas.

To keep the momentum of marriage equality moving forward, HRC launched the *Americans for Marriage Equality* campaign, a public engagement campaign featuring prominent Americans who

support committed gay and lesbian couples getting marriage. The campaign will draw from a cadre of supportive professional athletes, film and music celebrities, political and civil rights leaders—and will have a special emphasis on Republicans, African-Americans, Latinos and elected officials.

As part of the *Americans for Marriage Equality* campaign, HRC executed a multi-pronged strategy to win a successful committee vote on the [Respect for Marriage Act](#), including lobbying members and working with our allies to prepare for attacks against the bill. If passed, the Respect for Marriage Act would restore the rights of all lawfully married couples—including same-sex couples to receive the benefits of marriage under federal law.

HRC released a letter to Senate Judiciary Committee members from a bipartisan group of Governors and Mayors in marriage equality states calling for the repeal of the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act.

In addition to the letter, HRC delivered [135,000 petition signatures](#) to Senate offices showing the groundswell of public support for repeal of DOMA. The following day, Senate Judiciary Committee approved the Respect for Marriage Act along a party line vote.

HRC is taking the fight beyond the federal government to the state-level. In New York HRC spearheaded the largest field campaign ever in support of state LGBT rights legislation, leading to [the passage of marriage equality in New York](#).

Today, HRC remains at the forefront of the marriage equality fight. [HRC campaigned tirelessly](#) alongside state and local partners to secure passage of marriage equality in Maine, Maryland and Washington state, to defeat a proposed constitutional ban on same-sex marriage in Minnesota, and to help successfully defend marriage rights in New Hampshire. In the first three weeks of May 2013, HRC's extensive on-the-ground support helped usher in marriage equality in [Rhode Island](#), [Delaware](#) and [Minnesota](#). Investments and on-the-ground work in [New Jersey](#), [Illinois](#) and [Hawaii](#) helped lead to marriage equality in those states as well. HRC and allies continue to work toward full marriage equality across the country.

Only marriage can provide families with true equality, and we need your help to make it a reality. Join the movement and stand as an American for Marriage Equality.

Opinion

Give us your feedback! Check us out at SunSentinel.com/news/opinion

Embarrassed, insulted, and much more



Gary Stein

How should you feel about Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, Gov. Rick Scott, that their well-publicized fight against same-sex marriage? So glad you

asked.

No. 1, you could be insulted. Insulted one of the top elected officials in the state has the nerve to say same-sex marriage could cause great harm.

Insulted that she hides behind the line of "just following the law of the state" that bans same-sex marriage, when other attorneys general have seen fit to ignore the bans or not get involved, because they know its unconstitutional.

Insulted because Bondi had the nerve to say that Florida's ban on same-sex marriage increased "the likelihood that children will be born to and raised by the mothers and fathers who produced them in stable and enduring family units." Every same-sex couple that has adopted a child and

raised it in a loving family should be insulted by that. Every heterosexual couple that simply doesn't want children should be insulted by that.

Bondi, by the way, has been divorced twice. Not sure what she knows about stable and enduring family units, but that is her personal, private business. Just like same-sex marriage should be.

No. 2, you could be disgusted. Disgusted that Bondi and her boss, Gov. Rick Scott, continue to fight for the right to discriminate.

Disgusted that they both say they must following the law when it comes to same-sex marriage, which is a truly amazing statement. The Affordable Care Act -- Obamacare -- is the law of the land, and Scott has been fighting it from day one. He even has tried to stop Floridians who need Obamacare advice from getting it.

Scott continues to file costly lawsuits to get welfare recipients drug tested, even though the courts keep throwing them out -- and throwing out our tax money with it. And how can we forget how Bondi, who supported the Timely Justice Act aimed at



Should Pam Bondi really be a spokesperson for good parenting?

speeding up executions, was following her own law when she caused an execution to be delayed so she could go to a fund-raising bash?

Disgusted that Scott keeps talking about how he is so family-oriented. Is that why he supports every pro-gun law that makes its way through Tallahassee? Because he thinks guns are pro-family? Is that why he obviously feels gay families are not worthy of being treated as well as "real" families with a man and a woman?

Disgusted that Scott could talk out of both sides of his mouth, 19 other states now allow same-

sex marriage, Florida continues to fight against it as if it is doing something noble and worthwhile, instead of disgusting (see No. 2).

Embarrassed that a supposed cutting edge state like Florida can't understand that two people who love each other and want to get married should have that right, instead of having roadblocks and indignity thrown in front of them.

Embarrassed that when the governor and attorney general fight so hard against same-sex marriage, that gives more fuel to all the bigots out there, and you know who you are.

Embarrassed that too many people in Florida -- from the very top on down -- really don't understand what equality and dignity are all about.

And insulted, disgusted and embarrassed that in 2014, we even are having this discussion.

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Cartoon roundup

MIKE LUCKOVICH

Trying to choose between

corial fin flannor

State wrong in fight against same-sex marriage

Marriage equality is sweeping the country with staggering speed, a wave destined to hit Florida. Yet Florida leaders — starting with Attorney General Pam Bondi — continue to fight the inevitable, keeping our state on the wrong side of history.

In the latest salvo against same-sex marriage, the Associated Press reports that Bondi argued in court documents last week that recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other states would disrupt existing marriage law and “impose significant public harm.”

Bondi is asking a federal judge to throw out a lawsuit by eight gay couples that argues that Florida is discriminating against them by not recognizing same-sex marriages performed in other states. The lawsuit is scheduled to go to court July 2 in Miami.

Florida voters banned same-sex marriage with a constitutional amendment in 2008. In the years since, however, the courts and public sentiment have been moving deliberately toward the side of equality.

In the last month alone, federal judges have struck down bans on same-sex marriage in four states, declaring them unconstitutional. It seems every month, leaders in another state are giving up the fight against marriage equality. Same-sex marriage is now legal in 19 states, with Illinois coming on board June 1.

Most importantly, the U.S. Supreme Court last year struck down a key part of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, granting federal recognition to same-sex couples. According to the Human Rights Campaign, no state bans have since survived a court challenge.

Yet Florida continues to fight for the right to discriminate.

In court papers, Bondi said, “Florida’s marriage laws, then, have a close, direct and rational relationship to society’s legitimate interest in increasing the likelihood that children will be born to and raised by the mothers and fathers who produced them in stable and enduring family units.”

Bondi’s definition of family is nothing short of insulting to the same-sex couples who have adopted and raised children. It also makes you wonder how she feels about heterosexual couples who marry, but don’t have children. Does the state frown upon them, too?

According to the AP story, Bondi believes the state’s pension and health insurance programs would face significant financial and logistical problems if same-sex marriages were recognized.

You have to wonder whether Bondi, or Gov. Rick Scott, or anyone in state leadership read the heart-wrenching story earlier this year in the Sun Sentinel about the end-of-life problems faced by Deerfield Beach partners Chris MacLellan and Bernard Richard Schiffer. The financial and bureaucratic obstacles placed in front of the couple — as Richard faced the cancer that would take his life — showed how the marriage ban deprives gays of the legal rights afforded heterosexuals.

Floridians understand the concepts of fairness and dignity for all. That’s why, in a recent Quinnipiac poll, 56 percent of those polled supported allowing same-sex marriage, with 39 percent opposed. Polling nationally shows similar results.

The fight against equality and same-sex marriage is a battle the state of Florida is destined to lose, with good reason. The highest court in the land has ruled. Rather than spend more tax dollars fighting to enshrine a discriminatory policy, Bondi and our other leaders should listen to the people and work harder to represent us. All of us.

Monroe Udell



ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

From troubled foster kid

By JAMREL MCCLINE



McCline

Anthony Man’s May 18 story about my McCline for Congress candidacy gave me reason to pause.

“Jameel McCline isn’t anything like an ordinary congressional candidate,” wrote Man,

adding that I thought past mistakes made me “more relatable to the electorate.”

I agree with the first assessment, and I’m proud of it. But the second one’s not quite right. Let me explain.

The troubles I’ve known and mistakes I’ve made give me firsthand understanding of what it is to struggle in poverty, with too little help and too few options.

As I travel the 20th congressional district, I’m struck by how many residents are still stuck in that same situation.

I’m not more relatable to these

good people because of the mistakes I’ve made. I think they relate to my struggles. And they know I can relate to theirs.

When I tell struggling residents Belle Glade, Pahokee and other communities in crisis that I’m running Congress to bring them help and options, they know I mean it.

If I had more help and options when I aged out of foster care as a poor New York teenager, I don’t think I’d have ended up serving 5 years in prison for gun possession, fought my way back from that, all way to fame and fortune as a top professional prizefighter and a heavyweight champion.

But in transitioning out of boxing I ended up with a substance abuse problem and money troubles that led to bankruptcy. I lost everything I worked so hard for. Then, I came back again, beat drug addiction, straightened out my finances and built a successful sports consulting business.

Now, I want to be an inspiration to others, a champion for struggling

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks to lawmakers for taking stand on climate change

Recently, Congressman Ted Deutch and Congresswoman Lois Frankel joined more than 30 senators and representatives who rallied to wake up Congress and sound the alarm for action on climate change. It’s a wake-up call that Washington needs to hear following the recent National Climate Assessment, which details the real threats of climate change on our way of life. It is a message that will resonate as the EPA prepares to make major progress in the coming weeks.

Florida is taking important steps to invest in clean energy, prepare for rising sea levels and build more resilient communities. However, we know there is more work to be done. This state is particularly at risk from the impacts of more extreme storms, including the flooding and coastal erosion that come with increased precipitation. Thank you, Ted