

California gay marriage foes propose amendment, make unsupported claims

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The California Supreme Court rendered a landmark ruling on May 8, 2008 recognizing that barring same-sex marriage was discriminatory and against the state's constitution. The Court's ruling allowed gays to marry beginning June 16, 2008. California is the second state that currently allows same-sex marriage, joining the state of Massachusetts, which has acknowledged the rights of gays to marry since 2004.

In light of the California ruling, opponents of same-sex marriage turned to California's ballot initiative process in an effort to outlaw the right of same-sex couples to marry. According to the Los Angeles Law Library, "California... allows state citizens to bypass the Legislature and have a voice in directly adding, repealing, or amending provisions of the California Constitution or statutes." Accordingly, proponents of the gay marriage ban gathered sufficient signatures to place Proposition 8, officially titled "Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry," on the November 4th ballot as an amendment to California's Constitution.

The importance of the defeat or success of this ballot initiative and the impact on pro gay marriage groups and their foes cannot be understated. Each group is raising millions of dollars to make their case to the public as to why voters should or should not reverse the state's support of marriage for gays. The issue has garnered national attention.

Opponents of same-sex marriages cite numerous reasons why they renounce such unions. These reasons include: same-sex marriage damages the institution of marriage; children deserve parents of the opposite sex; marriage is for procreation; and, as presented in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed by David Blankenhorn on September 19, that children deserve to have biological parents.

The most egregious argument from gay marriage opponents is that gay marriage hurts children in some way. Most, if not all, credible mainstream organizations have debunked this rationale. Both the American Anthropological Association (AMA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) have made statements that contradict this argument.

The AMA's official statement on the issue is that, "The results of more than a century of anthropological research on households, kinship relationships, and families - across cultures and through time - provide no support whatsoever for the view that either civilization or viable social orders depend upon marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution. Rather, anthropological research supports the conclusion that a vast array of family types, including families built upon same-sex partnerships, can contribute to stable and humane societies."

The APA states the following: "...there is no evidence to suggest that lesbian women or gay men are unfit to be parents or that psychosocial development among children of

lesbian women or gay men is compromised relative to that among offspring of heterosexual parents. Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents. Indeed, the evidence to date suggests that home environments provided by lesbian and gay parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children's psychosocial growth.”

I too disagree with the basic tenet of this anti-gay marriage argument. If marriage was strictly about children, then the federal government would have to support an array of policies that most Americans today would find bizarre, such as allowing only fertile opposite sex couples to marry and outlawing divorce. In addition, allowing same-sex marriage gives same-sex parents the ability to better provide for their children through an array of benefits that are available to them with a recognized marriage, such as health and financial benefits.

The second most outlandish argument in opposition to gay marriage is that gay marriage damages the traditional institution of marriage. Marriage has evolved along with humanity. Many marriages in our history were arranged for political or financial reasons. The ability of loving same-sex couples to marry does not impede the ability of heterosexual couples to marry. Furthermore, same-sex marriage adds stability to American families in that it gives the thousands of same-sex families the ability to receive the same benefits and societal recognition that other American families receive.

There are many religious-based arguments against same-sex marriage, and I find it difficult to tell someone that their pastor or religion is wrong, even though I may believe that to be the case. For me, it is sufficient to acknowledge that while religion, specifically Christianity, played a role in the founding of this country, our Constitution (and the people who ratified it) inherently defined the separation of Church and State so that no one religion would impede on another and that government would stay secular. This being the case, I ask (and hope) that those that would oppose same-sex marriage on religious grounds keep their beliefs away from my right to marry, just as my religious beliefs should not allow me to take away their rights.

Gay marriage is about marriage equality. It is about strengthening families. It is about marrying the one you love. It is about giving the same rights, no more and no less, to gay couples that heterosexual couples already enjoy. I hope that the general election on November 4th in California will witness the defeat of Proposition 8 and the triumph for civil rights.

Suggested Further Readings:

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/sunday/commentary/la-oe-blankenhorn19-2008sep19,0,2112209.story>

<http://lalaw.lib.ca.us/research/ballots/>

<http://www.eqca.org/site/pp.asp?c=kuLRJ9MRKrH&b=4375153>

http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_j.htm

<http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Statement-on-Marriage-and-the-Family.cfm>

<http://www.apa.org/pi/parent.html>

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