

Opinion Editorial



new jersey family policy council

CONTACT: NJFPC President, Len Deo

1-(800) FAMILY-1

The Civil Union Question, and Polls vs. Votes

Toni Meyer, Sr. Research Analyst, NJ Family Policy Council

Currently, many New Jersey legislators are contemplating granting civil unions for same-sex couples in response to the NJ Supreme Court's mandate. A few legislators, who understand their legal roles, know that the Supreme Court has overstepped its bounds by reinterpreting the constitution and telling them what laws they must make. These few realize it is their responsibility to preserve marriage and its benefits for one-man and one-woman for the good of all society by way of a constitutional amendment. Regardless of one's current position, two factors must be strongly considered by all New Jersey citizens and all our legislators. First, all must realize that while there is *some* meaning to reserving the title "marriage" for the union of one-man and one-woman, granting all the benefits of marriage under a "civil union" title will ultimately incur similar societal repercussions. Secondly, legislators must understand that when it comes to public opinion polls on same-sex unions, polls do not equate to votes once citizens have had enough time to understand all the facts.

The fact of the matter is inventing a parallel system of marriage with the same benefits called "civil unions" will create a separate category of marriage that will be recognized and sanctioned by the state. Consequently, the force of the state will be brought upon our children in school, as well as all citizens with regard to behavior and free speech. Children will be taught from as early as kindergarten that same-sex unions are an equivalent alternative to heterosexual marriage. Right now in Massachusetts kids are being taught how to have homosexual sex and impressionable teens are taught to be open to the idea that they may in fact turn out to be homosexual.

Likewise with civil unions, the force of law will be used to take away the freedoms of the majority to speak out on this issue and conduct their businesses according to their conscience. In Massachusetts, Sweden, and Canada there have been numerous civil rights violations ranging from: telling parents they have no right to be informed about when explicit homosexual instruction takes place thereby preventing them from exempting their child from class, denying pastor's speech, and even denying private business owners the right to run their businesses as they see fit. Commercial printer Scott Brockie, a Christian, refused to print material for the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, stating that it would violate his religious beliefs to promote homosexual behavior. The Ontario Human Rights Commission ordered him to pay \$5,000 in fines and to print the material. After \$100,000 in legal fees, Brockie decided against further appeal. In Manitoba, Canada a *civil* official ordered Justice of the Peace, Kevin Kisilowsky, to conduct a homosexual wedding or else hand in his license.

According to recent polls in NJ, citizens have already begun to understand a bit more, the importance of preserving marriage. When NJ adults were asked in an October Star Ledger-Eagleton poll about whether they thought the legislature should respond to the NJ Supreme Court's decision by granting marriage or civil unions, only 40% supported civil unions and 29% chose marriage. But just last June, in response to a question about civil unions 65% supported them, and 50% said they favored marriage. This October's poll also showed that a majority of New Jerseyans, 54%, now support a constitutional

amendment versus only 40% back in June. If citizens begin to understand that civil unions are just a duck be another name, public opinion would shift again.

Moreover, legislators should be very leery of polls on marriage prior to an actual vote by the people. Here are some typical cases showing how people responded in various states to preserving marriage in polls, prior to the votes, versus how the citizens of those states actually voted. Arkansas: 64.8% pre-vote poll vs. actual vote of (75%); Georgia: 69% (76%); Kansas: 56% (79%); Kentucky: 71.6% (75%); Louisiana: 62% (78%); Michigan: 52% (59%); Montana: 61% (67%); Nevada: 43% (67%); North Dakota: 53% (73%); Ohio: 48% (62%); Oklahoma: 59% (76%); and Oregon: 50% (57%).

Why such a big difference between pre-vote polls and the actual votes? It's a combination of two major factors. Polling questions can be constructed to obtain a more desired outcome which slants the poll and accounts for some of the difference. But probably just as prominent, is the intimidation factor. Some unscrupulous politicians, activists and the media constantly rant that protecting marriage is "bigotry". It's no such thing, but some people are intimidated and fearful of being labeled a homophobe or bigot so they keep their opinions to themselves until they are in the privacy of the voting booth. Then on average nearly 70% have defended marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

NJ legislators would do well to keep this in mind as they are all up for re-election next fall. A wise choice instead would be to support a state constitutional amendment, send it to the ballot and "Let the People Decide" to preserve marriage.

Word Count = 831