

# Why Preserving Marriage Matters

**W**hat is the marriage debate really about, how does it affect society and what is at stake in the outcome of the referendum vote?

Many people mistakenly believe that allowing same-sex marriage is about allowing a new, different and separate form of marriage to coexist alongside traditional marriage. They envision it as a different expression of the same marriage institution they have always known. However, that is a fundamental misunderstanding of the legal issues involved in the debate.

What is at stake in this debate are two competing definitions of marriage. One definition — advocated by gay “marriage” activists — would define marriage as the union of any two people regardless of gender, with the law treating the parties’ genders as irrelevant to the meaning of marriage. The other definition reflects the collective understanding of virtually every nation throughout recorded history—marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

The legislation pending before the Illinois House of Representatives would not allow “same-sex marriage” in addition to natural marriage; it creates a whole new definition of marriage for everyone. As noted in a scholarly review published in the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy:

“...once the judiciary or legislature adopts ‘the union of any two persons’ as the legal definition of civil marriage, that conception becomes the sole definitional basis for the only law—sanctioned marriage that any couple can enter, whether same-sex or man—woman. Therefore, legally sanctioned genderless marriage, rather than peacefully coexisting with the contemporary man—woman marriage institution, actually displaces and replaces it.”

Why has virtually every society throughout history defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman? The answer can be summarized in one word: children.

Protecting the interests of children is the primary reason that government regulates and licenses marriage in the first place. After all, government does not license or regulate any other form of intimate relationship — not friendship, or dating, or cohabitation. People are free, under the law, to live as they choose, cohabit with whomever they choose and engage in sexually intimate relationships with whomever they choose — all without any governmental recognition or regulation.

Same-sex couples **ALREADY** enjoy all the same rights and benefits as married couples in Illinois under the civil unions law that went into effect in June of 2010.

## Why Preserving Marriage Matters

Marriage is a special relationship reserved exclusively for heterosexual unions because only the intimate relationship between men and women has the ability to produce children as a result of that sexual union. The marriage relationship is inherently different than a same-sex relationship in this important regard.

Marriage serves a vital and universal societal purpose — to channel biological drive and sexual passion that might otherwise become socially destructive into enduring family units that have the best opportunity to ensure the care and education of any children produced by that biological drive and sexual passion. Indeed, the United States Supreme Court has said that marriage is, “fundamental to the very existence and survival of the [human] race.”

By encouraging men and women to marry, society helps ensure that children will be known by and cared for by their parents. Men, especially, are encouraged to take responsibility for their children through the institution of marriage. Marriage is society's mechanism of increasing the likelihood that children will be born and raised by the two people responsible for bringing them into the world— their mother and father.

While death and divorce too often prevent it, the overwhelming body of social science evidence establishes that children do best when raised by their married mother and father. Simply stated, children need *both* a mother and a father. No matter one's view of homosexual "marriage," it is undeniable that every child born into a same-sex relationship is intentionally denied the love and affection of one of her biological parents.

David Blankenhorn, president of the Institute for American Values and a self-described liberal Democrat, said of marriage:

"[M]arriage is a gift that society bestows on its next generation. Marriage (and only marriage) unites the three core dimensions of parenthood — biological, social and legal — into one pro-child form: the married couple. Marriage says to a child: The man and woman whose sexual union made you will also be there to love and raise you. Marriage says to society as a whole: For every child born, there is a recognized mother and father, accountable to the child and to each other."

Fundamentally, same-sex marriage advocates propose to shift the marriage paradigm away from what definition of marriage is best for society — especially for children — and squarely onto the desires of the individual adults. Under a genderless definition of marriage, the interests of children — and therefore society's intrinsic interest in marriage — is eliminated entirely. Only the wishes of the two adults in question matter.

Again, Illinois State already affords same-sex couples the same benefits as married couples under the law.

When a court or a legislature adopts a genderless definition of marriage as is contained in the pending legislation, legal experts warn (and actual experience from other states and countries confirms) that there will be serious and widespread consequences for society. Those people who refuse to accept this redefinition of marriage will be punished by the law. Churches and religious organizations can lose their tax exemptions and be forced to abandon their core moral principles or face punishment. Individuals, small businesses and groups will be subjected to lawsuits and regulatory action if they refuse to condone the 'new' understanding of marriage.

Perhaps most profoundly, children at a very young age will be taught in school that marriage is between any two adults, no matter what they have been taught at home, in church or in their ethnic traditions. Under the law, those who believe otherwise will be treated as the legal and moral equivalent of bigots.

Marriage as the union of one man and one woman is in the public good. It serves the interests of men and women, of children, and of society itself. We as Illinois citizens and voters must rally together to mark **REJECT** the push to redefine marriage and fight to defend marriage for future generations. ●

