



**THE ETHICS &
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
COMMISSION**
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

Testimony of

Richard D. Land, D.Phil.

President

**The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention**

**Submitted to the Council of the District of Columbia's Committee on
Public Safety and the Judiciary**

Hearing on

**Bill 18-482, Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality
Amendment Act of 2009**

October 26, 2009

As the official public policy entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has been commissioned to address social and moral concerns to government officials. In this capacity, we unequivocally express our opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the District of Columbia. According to internal records, there are no less than 69 Southern Baptist churches within the District of Columbia and multiple dozens more in the D.C. metro area. We represent the interests of the vast majority of Southern Baptists in the District of Columbia and across the nation in our opposition to the proposal to legalize same-sex marriage in D.C.

The Southern Baptist Convention has been strong and consistent in its opposition to same-sex marriage, holding that marriage should be between one man and one woman, as this is best for children, individuals, families, communities, and nations. In this testimony, we make three arguments: 1) evidence shows that same-sex marriage would be detrimental to families in the District of Columbia; 2) legalizing same-sex marriage could significantly infringe on the religious liberty of citizens; and 3) Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant denomination in America with more than 16 million members worshipping in more than 44,000 churches, strongly oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage.

First, evidence suggests that legalizing same-sex marriage in the District of Columbia would damage families and communities. Marriage serves as the foundation of civil societies. Marriages form nuclear families, which, in turn, produce extended families, communities, and governments. Preserving families is vital for a well-functioning society. Studies have shown that marriage between a man and a woman improves the development and happiness of both children and the adults within the marriage, and cohabitation is not the equal of committed, heterosexual marriage. They conclude that traditional marriage is a social good that reduces child poverty, decreases infant mortality, and lowers rates of crime and substance abuse, among other things.¹ While aiding in the development of children and the happiness of adults, marriage also improves communities, making them more stable and less susceptible to dangers.² Therefore, we should encourage public policy that helps promote and preserve traditional marriage.

¹ Maggie Gallagher and Joshua K. Baker, "Do Mothers and Fathers Matter? The Social Science Evidence on Marriage and Child Well-Being," *iMAPP Policy Brief* (February 27, 2004), 1-5, <http://www.marriagedebate.com/pdf/MothersFathersMatter.pdf>. Gallagher and Baker cite: William J. Doherty, et al., *Why Marriage Matters: Twenty-One Conclusions from the Social Sciences* (New York: Institute for American Values, 2002); Kristin Anderson Moore, et al., "Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children and What Can We Do About It?," *Child Trends Research Brief* (Washington, D.C.: *Child Trends*, June 2002); Robert I. Lerman, "Impacts of Marital Status and Parental Presence on the Material Hardship of Families with Children," The Urban Institute (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, July 2002); and Matthew D. Bramlett and William D. Mosher, "First Marriage Dissolution, Divorce, and Remarriage: United States," *CDC Advance Data* no 323 (May 31, 2001).

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While traditional marriage improves the lives of families and communities, the legalization of same-sex marriage has been shown to weaken the institution of marriage. Ten years worth of data from Scandinavian countries, where same-sex marriage is legal, suggests that the number of marriages has decreased after same-sex marriage has been legalized.³ In addition, data in Sweden shows that same-sex marriages are more likely to end in divorce than heterosexual marriages, with males being 1.5 times more likely to divorce and females 2.67 times as likely, even after controlling for demographic characteristics.⁴ Therefore, legalizing same-sex marriage is certain to counteract the positive social attributes of traditional marriage, by leading to fewer marriages and more divorces.

Second, legalized same-sex marriage would likely infringe on the religious rights of citizens who oppose same-sex marriage. It will lead to the violation of the consciences of children in schools as they are subjected to teachings in an authoritarian environment that same-sex marriage is a legitimate form of marriage. Changing the definition of marriage would likely also result in government restrictions on the religious freedom of religious groups, potentially exposing them to government reprisal for honoring their faith convictions about homosexuality and consequently violating the civil rights of homosexual couples whose marriages have been legally sanctioned.⁵

Finally, Southern Baptists have opposed same-sex marriage consistently, believing that traditional marriage is a vital component of human society. The Southern Baptist Convention's summary of faith—*The Baptist Faith and Message*—includes a statement on marriage. In the section on the family, it declares, "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime." This faith summary has popular support among nearly all Southern Baptists, as it was revised in 2000 and overwhelmingly adopted by the messengers elected by local churches. In addition to *The Baptist Faith and Message*'s statement on marriage, the Southern Baptist Convention has also passed resolutions at its annual meetings opposing same-sex marriage. Five times since 1996, the Convention has expressed its opposition to the legalization of homosexual marriage and its support for marriage being defined as being the union of one man and one woman. In 2008, the Convention passed a resolution encouraging churches in every state to protect the traditional definition of marriage. Messengers to the Convention,

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elected by local churches across the nation, have overwhelmingly supported these resolutions each time they have been brought to the floor.⁶

For these reasons and others, we strongly oppose the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Amendment Act of 2009 (Bill 18-482) and any other proposed changes by the District of Columbia to the definition of marriage, in both law and practice. We, having the support of Southern Baptists within the District and across the country, hold that traditional marriage—the union of one man and one woman—is good for children, couples, and political society. We urge that any legislation about the definition of marriage should be presented to the citizens of the District of Columbia for a vote, as it is too important of a decision to be made solely by legislative, executive, or judicial bodies.

⁶ See Appendix for resolutions on marriage adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention: “On the California Supreme Court Decision to Allow Same-Sex Marriage,” adopted June 2008, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1190>; “On the Marriage Protection Amendment,” adopted June 2006, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1152>; “On Supporting a Federal Marriage Amendment,” adopted June 2004, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1134>; “On Covenant Marriage,” adopted June 2001, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=700>; “On Strengthening the Marriage Covenant,” adopted June 1998, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=699>; “On Marriage and Family Relations,” adopted May 1948, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=697>; “On Safeguarding the Homes and Health of Our People,” adopted May 1939, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=696>; and “On Marriage,” adopted May 1937, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=695>.



**RESOLUTION ON THE CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT DECISION TO
ALLOW SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**
Southern Baptist Convention
June 2008

WHEREAS, On May 15, 2008, the California Supreme Court struck down the state's ban on same-sex marriage thus frustrating the will of the people who, on March 7, 2000, voted in favor (61.4%) of Proposition 22 which affirmed, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California"; and

WHEREAS, This decision has dire national implications because California law will allow same-sex couples from any state to marry in California, return to their home state, and challenge that state's traditional marriage laws based on the full faith and credit clause of the Constitution of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has repeatedly refused to pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman, thus providing no federal protection from attacks against traditional marriage; and

WHEREAS, Marriage is ordained by God as a permanent union of one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24); and

WHEREAS, Jesus reaffirmed marriage as a sacred, monogamous, and life-long institution joining one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-6); and

WHEREAS, Any action giving homosexual unions the legal status of marriage denies the fundamental immorality of homosexual behavior (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11); and

WHEREAS, The people of California have collected over 1.1 million signatures on a petition requiring the state to place a referendum on the ballot in November defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 10-11, 2008, wholeheartedly support the people in California who have worked tirelessly to place this referendum on the ballot; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we strongly urge all Southern Baptists in the state of California to be informed about this issue and to exercise their civic and moral duty by working diligently to support and voting to pass this referendum; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage all Christian pastors in California and in every other state to speak strongly, prophetically, and redemptively concerning the sinful nature of homosexuality and the urgent need to protect biblical marriage in accordance with God's Word; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on all Southern Baptists and believers from all denominations everywhere to pray for the people of California as they seek to right this terrible wrong that has been forced upon them by the California Supreme Court's overturning of the vote of the people and to pray for the people of every state where biblical marriage is under attack; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we reaffirm our historic and consistent support of the biblical definition of marriage as an exclusive union between a man and a woman; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we once again call on the United States Congress to pass, the President to sign, and the states to ratify a constitutional amendment defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman.

Indianapolis, IN

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1190>

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RESOLUTION ON THE MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT
Southern Baptist Convention

June 2006

WHEREAS, God established the family as the primary and most influential social institution of mankind and ordained that each human family begin only with the marriage of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, The viability, strength, and stability of the social order within any nation is more dependent upon the wellbeing of this traditional family structure than any other social institution or agency; and

WHEREAS, This traditional family provides the best environment for birthing, training, and nurturing future generations (Deuteronomy 6:4-9); and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000, contains "Article XVIII. The Family," which states, "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime"; and

WHEREAS, The sacred institution of marriage is now under destructive attack in some state and federal courts and state legislatures, as well as numerous private and public entities; and

WHEREAS, Some state courts have proven unable to defend traditional marriage, ruling instead that God's design for marriage as only the union of one man and one woman is unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, State remedies protecting marriage are vulnerable to federal rulings; and

WHEREAS, Americans in nineteen states have voted by an average of 71 percent to amend their state constitutions to define marriage as only the union of one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, The United States Senate on two separate occasions failed to invoke cloture on a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as only the union of one man and one woman; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, June 13-14, 2006, express our grave disappointment with those senators who refused to allow the state legislatures the opportunity to affirm the will of the people on the biblical and traditional definition of marriage; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the United States House of Representatives to vote affirmatively on the Marriage Protection Amendment at the earliest possible moment and to represent the convictions of the vast majority of Americans, who believe that marriage should be only the union of one man and one woman; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we encourage those states that have not enacted laws defining marriage as only the union of one man and one woman to do so as soon as possible, before a judge forces them to accept so called "same-sex marriage."

Greensboro, NC

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1152>

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RESOLUTION ON SUPPORTING A FEDERAL MARRIAGE AMENDMENT
Southern Baptist Convention

June 2004

WHEREAS, Marriage is the foundation of the God-ordained institution of the family (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8); and

WHEREAS, The union of one man and one woman is the only form of marriage prescribed in the Bible as God's perfect design for the family (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, This traditional family is the fabric of all social order and the foundational institution that builds and maintains strong societies; and

WHEREAS, This traditional family provides the best environment for training and nurturing future generations (Deuteronomy 6:4-9); and

WHEREAS, The institution of marriage is now in crisis; and

WHEREAS, A decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has resulted in legal same- sex "marriages" in the state of Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Same-sex couples have challenged state laws protecting traditional marriage in the courts, and more challenges are expected; and

WHEREAS, Groups advocating same-sex "marriage" have pledged to challenge all state Defense of Marriage Acts (DOMAs) and the federal Defense of Marriage Act and, according to respected legal experts, courts in some of the states with DOMAs on the books are likely to rule those laws unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, Certain elected officials across the nation have acted outside the law, issuing counterfeit marriage licenses; and

WHEREAS, In 1998 the Southern Baptist Convention amended The Baptist Faith and Message by adding "Article XVIII. The Family," which states, "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment"; and

WHEREAS, On May 17, 2004, the presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries and their faculties issued a statement, entitled "No Man Put Asunder," upholding marriage as "a covenant that unites a man and a woman in a holy union," and in which they also affirmed "that marriage was designed for humanity by our Creator, who gave us marriage for the rightful ordering of human sexuality and relationships"; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention holds a clear position against same-sex "marriage," having passed resolutions opposing such unions and upholding traditional marriage in 1996, 1997, and 2003; and

WHEREAS, In order to prevent state courts or the United States Supreme Court from

redefining marriage, a Federal Marriage Amendment to the United States Constitution is necessary, defining marriage as exclusively the union between one man and one woman and prohibiting judges from forcing states or the federal government to legalize same-sex "marriage"; and

WHEREAS, Passing a constitutional amendment is, by design, a difficult task, requiring two-thirds majorities in both houses of the United States Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the state legislatures; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 15-16, 2004, declare our support for a Federal Marriage Amendment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call upon all members of both houses of Congress to pass a Federal Marriage Amendment and all state senators and legislators to ratify the same amendment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call upon Southern Baptists and all members of the Body of Christ to provide their elected representatives at the federal and state levels with verbal and written encouragement to pass such an amendment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commend President George W. Bush for his statements in support of a Federal Marriage Amendment; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we challenge pastors and leaders within the Body of Christ to support and faithfully promote a Federal Marriage Amendment.

Indianapolis

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1134>

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RESOLUTION ON COVENANT MARRIAGE
Southern Baptist Convention

June 2001

WHEREAS, The family is the first institution established by God (Genesis 2:18-25; Ephesians 5:22-33) and is ordained by God as the basic unit of society (Genesis 1:26-31); and

WHEREAS, Marriage is a sacred covenant between one man, one woman, and a holy God, intended for life (Matthew 19:4-9; Romans 7:2); and

WHEREAS, Marriage is honorable and is the only context for appropriate sexual expression according to biblical standards (Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, Increasingly, the institution of marriage is being attacked from many directions; and

WHEREAS, The breakup of marriages has lasting and devastating consequences for children as well as adults; and

WHEREAS, The disintegration of marriage has tragic implications for the future of our churches and our nation; and

WHEREAS, Many state governments are becoming supportive of the Covenant Marriage movement; and

WHEREAS, LifeWay Church Resources has developed materials for husbands and wives to renew their marriage covenants; and

WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist Convention entities and churches are active in the Covenant Marriage movement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 12-13, 2001, affirm the Covenant Marriage movement; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we applaud those state officials who have advanced the Covenant Marriage movement and encourage others to follow their example; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage all Southern Baptists to commit themselves to the biblical principles expressed by the Covenant Marriage movement; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptist churches to celebrate enthusiastically and emphasize annually the third Sunday in February, or some other day of their choice, as Covenant Marriage Sunday beginning on Sunday, February 17, 2002.

New Orleans, Louisiana

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RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING THE MARRIAGE COVENANT
Southern Baptist Convention

June 1998

WHEREAS, Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime; and

WHEREAS, The husband and wife forming a two-parent family is God's ideal, ordained by God to perform a unique role in the birth, loving discipline, and nurture of children; and

WHEREAS, American culture and public policy have failed to prevent a dramatic decline in the number of traditional two-parent families; and

WHEREAS, The growing social problems of child poverty, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, violent crimes committed by children, sexual promiscuity and teen pregnancy are often related to broken marriages and fractured families; and

WHEREAS, Some states have enacted legislation intended to strengthen the marriage covenant between husband and wife, including a model statute called "Covenant Marriage"; and

WHEREAS, The covenants involved in such model statutes are entirely voluntary, but once entered by a man and woman, either before or after marriage, constitute a legally binding commitment which requires greater care to be married, and greater caution to be divorced than is provided under many "no fault" divorce laws; and

WHEREAS, The new marriage covenant focuses on pre-marital and marital counseling to better equip and prepare couples for marriage; and

WHEREAS, The model programs recognize the limitations of law and public policy to change attitudes, and involves willing churches to participate by providing counseling and training prior to marriage.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 9-11, 1998, in Salt Lake City, Utah, express our enthusiastic support for such public policies and programs which aim to strengthen the marriage commitment and to reverse the trend of the disintegration of the nuclear family; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we applaud the cooperation between the policy-making bodies, married couples, and participating churches, in those states where such programs have been enacted; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we encourage other states to examine and adopt public policies such as Covenant Marriage which aim to strengthen marriages and families; and

Be it finally RESOVLED, That we encourage Southern Baptist churches and ministers

to make it a priority to provide pre-marital or marital counseling, or to develop effective referral relationships, and we urge the appropriate agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention to provide information and resources for use in strengthening marriages, whether through Covenant Marriage or other programs.

Salt Lake City, Utah

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RESOLUTION ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS
Southern Baptist Convention

May 1948

In the light of current trends and the increasing problems which endanger the stability of family life, we recommend that our pastors give serious study to those problems and to effective methods of dealing with them with a view to establishing a regular service in the church and community for instruction in domestic and marriage problems.

We further recommend that a special series of studies in the Christian ideals of courtship and marriage be made available to young people through the regular program of the local church.

Memphis, Tennessee

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=697>

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**RESOLUTION ON SAFEGUARDING THE HOMES AND HEALTH OF OUR
PEOPLE**
Southern Baptist Convention
May 1939

1. That we express our satisfaction that the States are beginning to recognize more fully and to exercise more freely their responsibility for better regulation of marriage, as indicated by the fact that eleven States now require physical examination both of the bride and groom before marriage license can be issued; five require examination of the groom only; eleven prohibit marriage of persons with social disease, and that some require personal affidavit of freedom from social disease, with no examination specified; and that thirty-three have had or have similar legislation pending before the 1939 Assembly.

2. That we express our hearty approval of such legislation and of all other reasonable measures to regulate marriage, such as laws setting proper age limit and requiring advance notice and publication before a license can be issued, and all other reasonable restrictions to safeguard the homes and protect the health of our people and to give permanency to the marriage relation and reduce the daily grind of the divorce mill.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=696>

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RESOLUTION ON MARRIAGE
Southern Baptist Convention

May 1937

1. That we deplore the laxity and inadequacy of existing statutes in the several states for the regulation of marriage.
2. That in the correction of these statutes we will find one of our best safeguards against and correctives of the widespread and growing divorce evil.
3. That we especially deplore the great number of "child marriages" which have occurred during the past year under these lax and inadequate statutes.
4. That our Baptist people as citizens be urged to use their influence for the enactment of saner and more adequate laws regulating and controlling the rite of marriage.

New Orleans, Louisiana

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=695>

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Testimony of

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President

**The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission
of the Southern Baptist Convention**

Submitted to the District of Columbia Board of Elections & Ethics

**To express support for the Marriage Initiative of 2009 and the right of
the citizens of the District of Columbia to be given opportunity to vote
on the definition of marriage in the District**

October 26, 2009

As the official public policy entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission has been commissioned to address social and moral concerns to government officials. In this capacity, we unequivocally express our opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the District of Columbia. According to internal records, there are no less than 69 Southern Baptist churches within the District of Columbia and multiple dozens more in the D.C. metro area. We represent the interests of the vast majority of Southern Baptists in the District of Columbia and across the nation in our opposition to the proposal to legalize same-sex marriage in D.C.

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For these reasons and others, we strongly oppose the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Equality Amendment Act of 2009 (Bill 18-482) and any other proposed changes by the District of Columbia to the definition of marriage, in both law and practice. We, having the support of Southern Baptists within the District and across the country, hold that traditional marriage—the union of one man and one woman—is good for children, couples, and political society. We urge that any legislation about the definition of marriage should be presented to the citizens of the District of Columbia for a vote, as it is too important of a decision to be made solely by legislative, executive, or judicial bodies.

⁶ See Appendix for resolutions on marriage adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention: “On the California Supreme Court Decision to Allow Same-Sex Marriage,” adopted June 2008, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1190>; “On the Marriage Protection Amendment,” adopted June 2006, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1152>; “On Supporting a Federal Marriage Amendment,” adopted June 2004, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1134>; “On Covenant Marriage,” adopted June 2001, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=700>; “On Strengthening the Marriage Covenant,” adopted June 1998, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=699>; “On Marriage and Family Relations,” adopted May 1948, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=697>; “On Safeguarding the Homes and Health of Our People,” adopted May 1939, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=696>; and “On Marriage,” adopted May 1937, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=695>.



**RESOLUTION ON THE CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT DECISION TO
ALLOW SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**
Southern Baptist Convention
June 2008

WHEREAS, On May 15, 2008, the California Supreme Court struck down the state's ban on same-sex marriage thus frustrating the will of the people who, on March 7, 2000, voted in favor (61.4%) of Proposition 22 which affirmed, "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California"; and

WHEREAS, This decision has dire national implications because California law will allow same-sex couples from any state to marry in California, return to their home state, and challenge that state's traditional marriage laws based on the full faith and credit clause of the Constitution of the United States; and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress has repeatedly refused to pass a constitutional amendment defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman, thus providing no federal protection from attacks against traditional marriage; and

WHEREAS, Marriage is ordained by God as a permanent union of one man and one woman (Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24); and

WHEREAS, Jesus reaffirmed marriage as a sacred, monogamous, and life-long institution joining one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4-6); and

WHEREAS, Any action giving homosexual unions the legal status of marriage denies the fundamental immorality of homosexual behavior (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11); and

WHEREAS, The people of California have collected over 1.1 million signatures on a petition requiring the state to place a referendum on the ballot in November defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 10-11, 2008, wholeheartedly support the people in California who have worked tirelessly to place this referendum on the ballot; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we strongly urge all Southern Baptists in the state of California to be informed about this issue and to exercise their civic and moral duty by working diligently to support and voting to pass this referendum; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage all Christian pastors in California and in every other state to speak strongly, prophetically, and redemptively concerning the sinful nature of homosexuality and the urgent need to protect biblical marriage in accordance with God's Word; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on all Southern Baptists and believers from all denominations everywhere to pray for the people of California as they seek to right this terrible wrong that has been forced upon them by the California Supreme Court's overturning of the vote of the people and to pray for the people of every state where biblical marriage is under attack; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we reaffirm our historic and consistent support of the biblical definition of marriage as an exclusive union between a man and a woman; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we once again call on the United States Congress to pass, the President to sign, and the states to ratify a constitutional amendment defining marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman.

Indianapolis, IN

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RESOLUTION ON THE MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT
Southern Baptist Convention

June 2006

WHEREAS, God established the family as the primary and most influential social institution of mankind and ordained that each human family begin only with the marriage of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8; Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, The viability, strength, and stability of the social order within any nation is more dependent upon the wellbeing of this traditional family structure than any other social institution or agency; and

WHEREAS, This traditional family provides the best environment for birthing, training, and nurturing future generations (Deuteronomy 6:4-9); and

WHEREAS, The Baptist Faith and Message, adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000, contains "Article XVIII. The Family," which states, "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime"; and

WHEREAS, The sacred institution of marriage is now under destructive attack in some state and federal courts and state legislatures, as well as numerous private and public entities; and

WHEREAS, Some state courts have proven unable to defend traditional marriage, ruling instead that God's design for marriage as only the union of one man and one woman is unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, State remedies protecting marriage are vulnerable to federal rulings; and

WHEREAS, Americans in nineteen states have voted by an average of 71 percent to amend their state constitutions to define marriage as only the union of one man and one woman; and

WHEREAS, The United States Senate on two separate occasions failed to invoke cloture on a federal constitutional amendment defining marriage as only the union of one man and one woman; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina, June 13-14, 2006, express our grave disappointment with those senators who refused to allow the state legislatures the opportunity to affirm the will of the people on the biblical and traditional definition of marriage; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the United States House of Representatives to vote affirmatively on the Marriage Protection Amendment at the earliest possible moment and to represent the convictions of the vast majority of Americans, who believe that marriage should be only the union of one man and one woman; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we encourage those states that have not enacted laws defining marriage as only the union of one man and one woman to do so as soon as possible, before a judge forces them to accept so called "same-sex marriage."

Greensboro, NC

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RESOLUTION ON SUPPORTING A FEDERAL MARRIAGE AMENDMENT
Southern Baptist Convention

June 2004

WHEREAS, Marriage is the foundation of the God-ordained institution of the family (Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8); and

WHEREAS, The union of one man and one woman is the only form of marriage prescribed in the Bible as God's perfect design for the family (Genesis 2:24; Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, This traditional family is the fabric of all social order and the foundational institution that builds and maintains strong societies; and

WHEREAS, This traditional family provides the best environment for training and nurturing future generations (Deuteronomy 6:4-9); and

WHEREAS, The institution of marriage is now in crisis; and

WHEREAS, A decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has resulted in legal same- sex "marriages" in the state of Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS, Same-sex couples have challenged state laws protecting traditional marriage in the courts, and more challenges are expected; and

WHEREAS, Groups advocating same-sex "marriage" have pledged to challenge all state Defense of Marriage Acts (DOMAs) and the federal Defense of Marriage Act and, according to respected legal experts, courts in some of the states with DOMAs on the books are likely to rule those laws unconstitutional; and

WHEREAS, Certain elected officials across the nation have acted outside the law, issuing counterfeit marriage licenses; and

WHEREAS, In 1998 the Southern Baptist Convention amended The Baptist Faith and Message by adding "Article XVIII. The Family," which states, "Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment"; and

WHEREAS, On May 17, 2004, the presidents of the six Southern Baptist seminaries and their faculties issued a statement, entitled "No Man Put Asunder," upholding marriage as "a covenant that unites a man and a woman in a holy union," and in which they also affirmed "that marriage was designed for humanity by our Creator, who gave us marriage for the rightful ordering of human sexuality and relationships"; and

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention holds a clear position against same-sex "marriage," having passed resolutions opposing such unions and upholding traditional marriage in 1996, 1997, and 2003; and

WHEREAS, In order to prevent state courts or the United States Supreme Court from

redefining marriage, a Federal Marriage Amendment to the United States Constitution is necessary, defining marriage as exclusively the union between one man and one woman and prohibiting judges from forcing states or the federal government to legalize same-sex "marriage"; and

WHEREAS, Passing a constitutional amendment is, by design, a difficult task, requiring two-thirds majorities in both houses of the United States Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the state legislatures; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 15-16, 2004, declare our support for a Federal Marriage Amendment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call upon all members of both houses of Congress to pass a Federal Marriage Amendment and all state senators and legislators to ratify the same amendment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call upon Southern Baptists and all members of the Body of Christ to provide their elected representatives at the federal and state levels with verbal and written encouragement to pass such an amendment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commend President George W. Bush for his statements in support of a Federal Marriage Amendment; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we challenge pastors and leaders within the Body of Christ to support and faithfully promote a Federal Marriage Amendment.

Indianapolis

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RESOLUTION ON COVENANT MARRIAGE
Southern Baptist Convention

June 2001

WHEREAS, The family is the first institution established by God (Genesis 2:18-25; Ephesians 5:22-33) and is ordained by God as the basic unit of society (Genesis 1:26-31); and

WHEREAS, Marriage is a sacred covenant between one man, one woman, and a holy God, intended for life (Matthew 19:4-9; Romans 7:2); and

WHEREAS, Marriage is honorable and is the only context for appropriate sexual expression according to biblical standards (Hebrews 13:4); and

WHEREAS, Increasingly, the institution of marriage is being attacked from many directions; and

WHEREAS, The breakup of marriages has lasting and devastating consequences for children as well as adults; and

WHEREAS, The disintegration of marriage has tragic implications for the future of our churches and our nation; and

WHEREAS, Many state governments are becoming supportive of the Covenant Marriage movement; and

WHEREAS, LifeWay Church Resources has developed materials for husbands and wives to renew their marriage covenants; and

WHEREAS, Many of our Southern Baptist Convention entities and churches are active in the Covenant Marriage movement; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, June 12-13, 2001, affirm the Covenant Marriage movement; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we applaud those state officials who have advanced the Covenant Marriage movement and encourage others to follow their example; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage all Southern Baptists to commit themselves to the biblical principles expressed by the Covenant Marriage movement; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we urge Southern Baptist churches to celebrate enthusiastically and emphasize annually the third Sunday in February, or some other day of their choice, as Covenant Marriage Sunday beginning on Sunday, February 17, 2002.

New Orleans, Louisiana

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RESOLUTION ON STRENGTHENING THE MARRIAGE COVENANT
Southern Baptist Convention

June 1998

WHEREAS, Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime; and

WHEREAS, The husband and wife forming a two-parent family is God's ideal, ordained by God to perform a unique role in the birth, loving discipline, and nurture of children; and

WHEREAS, American culture and public policy have failed to prevent a dramatic decline in the number of traditional two-parent families; and

WHEREAS, The growing social problems of child poverty, child abuse, juvenile delinquency, violent crimes committed by children, sexual promiscuity and teen pregnancy are often related to broken marriages and fractured families; and

WHEREAS, Some states have enacted legislation intended to strengthen the marriage covenant between husband and wife, including a model statute called "Covenant Marriage"; and

WHEREAS, The covenants involved in such model statutes are entirely voluntary, but once entered by a man and woman, either before or after marriage, constitute a legally binding commitment which requires greater care to be married, and greater caution to be divorced than is provided under many "no fault" divorce laws; and

WHEREAS, The new marriage covenant focuses on pre-marital and marital counseling to better equip and prepare couples for marriage; and

WHEREAS, The model programs recognize the limitations of law and public policy to change attitudes, and involves willing churches to participate by providing counseling and training prior to marriage.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting June 9-11, 1998, in Salt Lake City, Utah, express our enthusiastic support for such public policies and programs which aim to strengthen the marriage commitment and to reverse the trend of the disintegration of the nuclear family; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we applaud the cooperation between the policy-making bodies, married couples, and participating churches, in those states where such programs have been enacted; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we encourage other states to examine and adopt public policies such as Covenant Marriage which aim to strengthen marriages and families; and

Be it finally RESOVLED, That we encourage Southern Baptist churches and ministers

to make it a priority to provide pre-marital or marital counseling, or to develop effective referral relationships, and we urge the appropriate agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention to provide information and resources for use in strengthening marriages, whether through Covenant Marriage or other programs.

Salt Lake City, Utah

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RESOLUTION ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS
Southern Baptist Convention

May 1948

In the light of current trends and the increasing problems which endanger the stability of family life, we recommend that our pastors give serious study to those problems and to effective methods of dealing with them with a view to establishing a regular service in the church and community for instruction in domestic and marriage problems.

We further recommend that a special series of studies in the Christian ideals of courtship and marriage be made available to young people through the regular program of the local church.

Memphis, Tennessee

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**RESOLUTION ON SAFEGUARDING THE HOMES AND HEALTH OF OUR
PEOPLE**
Southern Baptist Convention
May 1939

1. That we express our satisfaction that the States are beginning to recognize more fully and to exercise more freely their responsibility for better regulation of marriage, as indicated by the fact that eleven States now require physical examination both of the bride and groom before marriage license can be issued; five require examination of the groom only; eleven prohibit marriage of persons with social disease, and that some require personal affidavit of freedom from social disease, with no examination specified; and that thirty-three have had or have similar legislation pending before the 1939 Assembly.

2. That we express our hearty approval of such legislation and of all other reasonable measures to regulate marriage, such as laws setting proper age limit and requiring advance notice and publication before a license can be issued, and all other reasonable restrictions to safeguard the homes and protect the health of our people and to give permanency to the marriage relation and reduce the daily grind of the divorce mill.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

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RESOLUTION ON MARRIAGE
Southern Baptist Convention

May 1937

1. That we deplore the laxity and inadequacy of existing statutes in the several states for the regulation of marriage.
2. That in the correction of these statutes we will find one of our best safeguards against and correctives of the widespread and growing divorce evil.
3. That we especially deplore the great number of "child marriages" which have occurred during the past year under these lax and inadequate statutes.
4. That our Baptist people as citizens be urged to use their influence for the enactment of saner and more adequate laws regulating and controlling the rite of marriage.

New Orleans, Louisiana

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