



March 17, 2009

Should Government Get Out of the "Marriage Business?"

There is an argument circulating in various quarters that suggests a compromise in the national debate over same-sex marriage. The solution goes like this: states would offer "civil unions" to heterosexual and same-sex couples, and leave the title "marriage" to be conferred by religious institutions. At first glance, it looks as if this plan could diffuse the current contentious national battle over who gets to be "married." Churches would regulate marriage; the state would simply recognize unions. But according to marriage expert, Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse, the idea of the government moving further away from its historic role of regulating marriage is a bad one because of one very important component: children. She argues, "Marriage is adult society's institutional structure for protecting the legitimate interests of children."

Morse argues that the states have already distanced themselves from the "marriage business" with the passage of "no-fault divorce." Couples are not held responsible for failing to uphold their contractual agreement. This retreat by the government to permit marriages to dissolve for any reason at all, encourages family fragmentation and the resulting repercussions to the children left behind with family courts and social services often left to pick up the pieces.

Government backed "civil unions" would simply become a contract between two adults further compromising the traditional definition of marriage as the primary contract between adults and the offspring they produce.

Morse states, "As things now stand, we are obsessing over fairness to adults while avoiding even talking about what is owed to children. Getting the state out of the marriage business is not a reasonable compromise but a complete abdication of our responsibility to face the important question of how we provide children with their just entitlements."

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Pennsylvania for Marriage recognizes the important role state governments have in regulating marriage as the primary safeguard for raising children. 45 states have laws on the books confirming marriage as the union of husband and wife. With courts often working against the will of the people, Pennsylvania's adults *and* children deserve the additional constitutional protection a state marriage amendment would afford.

For more information visit www.PA4Marriage.org or call 717-657-4990 x106.