



Office of the President

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3100 • FAX 202-541-3166

Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, S.L.D.
Bishop of Belleville

July 6, 2004

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

I write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to urge your support for S.J. Res. 30, the Federal Marriage Amendment. As you know, S.J. Res. 30 would amend the United States Constitution to define marriage as consisting only of the union of a man and a woman. The Senate Majority Leader has indicated his intention to bring S.J. Res. 30 before the Senate in mid-July. However, opponents may mount a filibuster that could prevent the Senate from even considering this important measure. The Catholic Bishops of the United States strongly urge you to vote *AGAINST* any effort that would prevent the Senate from voting on this important measure, as well as to vote *FOR* the measure once the Senate takes it up.

Our concern for preserving marriage as the union of a man and a woman is not simply a Catholic concern. We share it with believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians alike, simply because this understanding is part of the common moral heritage of humanity.

It is precisely this moral heritage that must be protected today from a small but vocal minority that would alter the definition of marriage by making same-sex unions the legal equivalent of marriage. A same-sex union is not equivalent to marriage. It is not based on the natural complementarity of male and female; it cannot cooperate with God to create new life; it cannot be a true conjugal union.

Recent actions in various state courts and courthouses have placed the institution of marriage under serious attack and in grave danger. The Catholic Bishops of the United States strongly believe that marriage is a basic human institution and that, though it is regulated by civil laws and church laws, it did not originate from either the church or state, but from God. Accordingly, the Bishops believe that neither church nor the state can alter the basic meaning and structure of marriage.

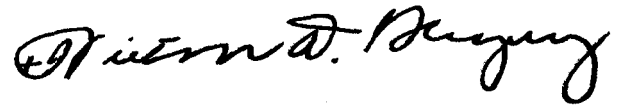
Marriage, as properly understood, is more than a lifestyle choice. It is an interpersonal relationship with public significance. It makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good of society when it fulfills its natural, God-given purposes, namely, to bring

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children into the world and care for them and to provide a way for a man and a woman to seek each other's good in a committed, lifetime relationship.

The institution of marriage has been weakened and eroded by many forces. The social cost is already too high. The Catholic Bishops of the United States urge your support for amending the United States Constitution to preserve and protect this vital institution that undergirds the well-being of spouses, children, families, communities, and society itself.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wilton D. Gregory". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "G" at the end.

Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory
Bishop of Belleville
President