

No. 14-50196

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IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

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CLEOPATRA DELEON; NICOLE DIMETMAN;  
VICTOR HOLMES; MARK PHARISS,  
*Plaintiffs-Appellees,*

v.

RICK PERRY, in his official capacity as Governor of the State of Texas;  
GREG ABBOTT, in his official capacity as Texas Attorney General;  
DAVID LAKEY, in his official capacity as Commissioner of the  
Texas Department of State Health Services,  
*Defendants-Appellants.*

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On Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the Western District of Texas, San Antonio Division  
Case No. 5:13-cv-982

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**Brief of *Amici Curiae* United States Conference of Catholic Bishops;  
National Association of Evangelicals; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-  
day Saints; The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern  
Baptist Convention; and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
In Support of Defendants-Appellants and Supporting Reversal**

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RICHARD A. BORDELON, ESQ. (Bar Roll No. 14091)

*Counsel of Record*

RALPH J. AUCOIN, ESQ. (Bar Roll No. 02606)

DENECHAUD AND DENECHAUD, L.L.P.

1010 Common Street, Ste. 3010

New Orleans, LA 70112

(504) 522-4756

[rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com](mailto:rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com)

Attorneys for *Amici Curiae* Religious Organizations

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**CERTIFICATE OF INTERESTED PARTIES**

The undersigned counsel of record certifies that the following listed persons and entities as described in the fourth sentence of Fifth Circuit Rule 28.2.1 have an interest in the outcome of this case. These representations are made in order that the judges of this court may evaluate possible disqualification or recusal. In addition, pursuant to Rule 26.1 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, the undersigned counsel states that none of the religious organizations joining this *amicus* brief issues stock or has a parent corporation that issues stock.

<b>Plaintiffs</b>	<b>Plaintiffs' Counsel</b>
Cleopatra DeLeon Nicole Dimetman Victor Holmes Mark Phariss	Barry Alan Chasnoff Jessica M. Weisel Michael P. Cooley Daniel McNeel Lane, Jr. Matthew Edwin Pepping Andrew Forest Newman AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP
<b>Defendants</b>	<b>Defendants' Counsel</b>
Governor Rick Perry Attorney General Greg Abbott Commissioner David Lakey	Jonathan F. Mitchell Kyle D. Highful Beth Klusmann Michael P. Murphy OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS

<b><i>Amici Curiae</i> Religious Organizations</b>	<b>Counsel for <i>Amici Curiae</i></b>
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops; National Association of Evangelicals; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention; and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod	Richard A. Bordelon, Esq. Ralph J. Aucoin, Esq. DENECHAUD AND DENECHAUD, L.L.P.

By: /s/ Richard A. Bordelon, Esq.  
Richard A. Bordelon, Esq.  
DENECHAUD AND DENECHAUD, L.L.P.

Counsel for *Amici Curiae*

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**IDENTITY AND INTEREST OF *AMICI***

The voices of millions of Americans are represented in the broad cross-section of faith communities that join in this brief. Our theological perspectives, though often differing, converge on a critical point: that husband-wife marriage is vital to the welfare of children, families, and society. Faith communities like ours are among the essential pillars of this Nation's marriage culture. With our teachings, rituals, traditions, and ministries, we sustain and nourish both individual marriages and a culture that makes enduring marriages possible. We have the deepest interest in strengthening the time-honored institution of marriage both because of our religious beliefs and because of the profound benefits it provides children, families, and society. Our practical experience in this area is unequalled. In millions of ministry settings each day we see the benefits that married mother-father parenting brings to children. And we deal daily with the devastating effects of out-of-wedlock births, failed marriages, and the general decline of the venerable husband-wife marriage institution.

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<sup>1</sup> No party's counsel authored the brief in whole or in part, and no one other than the *amici curiae*, their members, or their counsel contributed money that was intended to fund preparing or submitting the brief. This brief is filed with the consent of all parties. Fed. R. App. P. 29(a).

We therefore seek to be heard in the democratic and judicial forums where the fate of that foundational institution will be decided. We urge this Court to allow the marriage debate to be resolved through the democratic process, where the views of all citizens can be accounted for. Contrary to arguments by some advocates of same-sex marriage, people of faith and their religious organizations, no less than any others, have “a fundamental right . . . to speak and debate and learn and then, as a matter of political will, to act through a lawful electoral process.” *Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, No. 12-682, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*15 (U.S. Apr. 22, 2014) (plurality op.) (Kennedy, J.). That “fundamental right” applies as much to the issue of same-sex marriage as to the issue of affirmative action. *See id.*

This brief is submitted out of a shared conviction that the People of Texas did not violate the United States Constitution by acting to preserve the traditional definition of marriage. Individual statements of interest are found in the attached Addendum.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Advocates striving to redefine marriage routinely argue that those who defend marriage between a man and a woman are motivated by

“anti-gay animus,” in the form of unthinking ignorance or actual hostility. Such aspersions are often cast at people and institutions of faith.

The accusation is false and offensive. It is intended to suppress rational dialogue and democratic conversation, to win by insult and intimidation rather than by persuasion based on reason, experience, and fact. In truth, we support the husband-wife definition of marriage because we believe it is right and good for children, families, and society. Our respective faith traditions teach us that truth. But so do reason, long experience, and social fact.

We are among the “many religions [that] recognize marriage as having spiritual significance,” *Turner v. Safley*, 482 U.S. 78, 96 (1987), indeed as being truly “sacred.” *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479, 486 (1965). Our commitment to traditional marriage reflects an undeniable “belie[f] in a divine creator and a divine law,” *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, Nos. 13-354, 13-356, 2014 WL 2921709, at \*28 (U.S. June 30, 2014) (Kennedy, J., concurring), and “must be understood by precepts far beyond the authority of government to alter or define.” *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, 572 U.S. \_\_\_, 134 S. Ct. 1811,

1827 (2014) (plurality op.) (Kennedy, J.). Our respective religious doctrines hold that marriage between a man and a woman is sanctioned by God as the right and best setting for bearing and raising children. We believe that children, families, society, and our Nation thrive best when husband-wife marriage is sustained and strengthened as a cherished, primary social institution. The lives of millions of Americans are ordered around the family and derive meaning and stability from that institution. We make no apologies for these sincerely held religious beliefs.

But the value we place on husband-wife marriage is also influenced by rational judgments about human nature and the needs of individuals and society (especially children) and by our collective experience counseling and serving millions of people over countless years. For these reasons, too, we are convinced that traditional marriage is indispensable to the common good and our republican form of government.

As our faith communities seek to sustain and transmit the virtues of husband-wife marriage and family life, our teachings and rituals seldom focus on sexual orientation or homosexuality. Our support for

the historic meaning of marriage arises from an affirmative vision of “the family, as consisting in and springing from the union for life of one man and one woman in the holy estate of matrimony,” *Murphy v. Ramsey*, 114 U.S. 15, 44 (1885), and not from animosity toward anyone.

In this brief we demonstrate that Article I, § 32 of the Texas Constitution, and related provisions of the Texas Family Code, should not be overturned based on the spurious charge that religious organizations and voters support such laws out of animus. Our faith communities bear no ill will toward same-sex couples, but rather have marriage-affirming religious beliefs that merge with both practical experience and sociological fact to convince us that retaining the husband-wife marriage definition is essential. We further demonstrate that under Supreme Court jurisprudence the notion of “animus” holds limited relevance—and none here. Finally, we refute the suggestion that the Establishment Clause limits the fundamental right of persons and institutions of faith to participate fully in the democratic process. The fact that religious believers support the Texas Marriage Amendment by no stretch undermines its constitutionality.



## ARGUMENT

### I. **The Texas Marriage Amendment Should Not Be Invalidated or Subjected to Closer Judicial Scrutiny Based on False Accusations of Animus.**

The district court declared Texas marriage laws unconstitutional because they allegedly violate Supreme Court precedent “prohibit[ing] states from passing legislation born out of animosity toward homosexuals.” *DeLeon v. Perry*, 975 F.Supp.2d 632, 666 (W.D. Tex. 2014); *accord id.* at 662 (suggesting that Texas lacked any purpose for refusing to recognize same-sex marriages performed out of state “other than to effect pure animus”) (quoting *Obergefell v. Wymyslo*, 962 F.Supp.2d 968, 996 (S.D. Ohio 2013)).

We emphatically deny that religious organizations and voters support marriage between a man and a woman out of animus. Our faiths teach love and respect for all people. The understanding of marriage as a faithful union of man and woman predates by centuries the demand for same-sex marriage,<sup>2</sup> and our support for it has nothing to do with disrespect or antipathy toward any group.

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<sup>2</sup> *See, e.g.*, JOHN WITTE JR., FROM SACRAMENT TO CONTRACT: MARRIAGE, RELIGION, AND LAW IN THE WESTERN TRADITION 17 (2d ed. 2012) (describing heterosexual monogamy as an idea “inherited from ancient Greece and Rome”).

Our support for man-woman marriage stands on the affirmative belief that such unions complement our human natures as male and female, promote responsible procreation, and provide the best environment for children. These beliefs are echoed in numerous Supreme Court decisions holding that husband-wife marriage—“an institution more basic in our civilization than any other,” *Williams v. North Carolina*, 317 U.S. 287, 303 (1942)—is “the most important relation in life” and “ha[s] more to do with the morals and civilization of a people than any other institution.” *Maynard v. Hill*, 125 U.S. 190, 205 (1888).

Reducing religious support for traditional marriage to ignorance, hostility or bigotry ignores numerous rational “reasons ... to promote the institution of marriage beyond mere moral disapproval of an excluded group.” *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558, 585 (2003) (O’Connor, J., concurring). Those reasons are informed by history, right reason, experience, common sense, and social science. Many courts have found those reasons persuasive. *See, e.g., Citizens for Equal Protection v. Bruning*, 455 F.3d 859, 867-68 (8th Cir. 2006); *Hernandez v. Robles*, 855 N.E.2d 1 (N.Y. 2006).

**A. We Defend Traditional Marriage Out of Fidelity to Religious Beliefs That Include But Transcend Teachings About Human Sexuality, Not Out of Animus.**

Let us first dispel the myth that hostility lies at the root of religious support for husband-wife marriage. Jesus expressed no disapproval or hostility when he taught, “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’” *Matthew* 19:4-5 (RSV). Nor were the ancient Jewish scriptural texts that Jesus referenced based on animosity toward anyone. *See Genesis* 1:27, 2:23 (RSV).

Faith communities and religious organizations like *amici* have long histories of upholding traditional marriage for reasons that have nothing to do with homosexuality. Indeed, their support precedes by centuries the very idea of same-sex marriage. Many of this Nation’s prominent faith traditions have rich religious narratives that extol the personal, familial, and social virtues of traditional marriage while barely mentioning homosexuality.

*The Catholic Tradition.* With a tradition stretching back two millennia, the Catholic Church recognizes marriage as a permanent, faithful, and fruitful covenant between a man and a woman that is indispensable to the common good.<sup>3</sup> Marriage has its origin, not in the will of any particular people, religion, or state, but rather, in the nature of the human person, created by God as male and female. When joined in marriage, a man and woman uniquely complement one another spiritually, emotionally, psychologically, and physically. This makes it possible for them to unite in a one-flesh union capable of participating in God’s creative action through the generation of new human life. Without this unitive complementarity—and the corresponding capacity for procreation that is unique to such a union—there can be no marriage.<sup>4</sup> These fundamental Catholic teachings about marriage do not mention and have nothing to do with same-sex attraction.

*The Evangelical Protestant Tradition.* For five centuries the various denominational voices of Protestantism have taught marriage from a biblical view focused on uniting a man and woman in a divinely

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<sup>3</sup> See CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ¶ 1601 (2d ed. 1994).

<sup>4</sup> See *id.* at ¶¶ 371-72.

sanctioned companionship for the procreation and rearing of children and the benefit of society. One representative Bible commentary teaches: “Marriage . . . was established by God at creation, when God created the first human beings as ‘male and female’ (Gen. 1:27) and then said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’ (Gen. 1:28). . . . Marriage begins with a commitment before God and other people to be husband and wife for life,” with “[s]ome kind of public commitment” being important so that society can “know to treat a couple as married and not as single.”<sup>5</sup> Homosexuality is far from central to Evangelical teachings on marriage.

*The Latter-day Saint (Mormon) Tradition.* Marriage is fundamental to the doctrine of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A formal doctrinal proclamation on marriage declares that “[m]arriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God,” that “[c]hildren are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity,” and that “[h]usband and wife have a solemn

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<sup>5</sup> ESV STUDY BIBLE 2543-44 (2008).

responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children.”<sup>6</sup> Strong families based on husband-wife marriage “serve as the fundamental institution for transmitting to future generations the moral strengths, traditions, and values that sustain civilization.”<sup>7</sup> Here again, homosexuality is remote from teachings about marriage and family.

\* \* \*

In sum, our religious understandings of marriage are rooted in beliefs about God’s will concerning men, women, children, and society, rather than in the narrower issue of homosexuality. Religious teachings may address homosexual conduct and other departures from the marriage norm, but such issues are a secondary and small part of religious discourse on marriage. Indeed, it is only the recent same-sex marriage movement that has made it more common for religious organizations to include discussions of homosexuality in their teachings on marriage. The contention that religious support for husband-wife

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<sup>6</sup> THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, *THE FAMILY: A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD* (Sept. 23, 1995), available at <http://www.lds.org/topics/family-proclamation>.

<sup>7</sup> The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Newsroom, *The Divine Institution of Marriage* (Aug. 13, 2008), <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/commentary/the-divine-institution-of-marriage>.

marriage is founded on anti-homosexual animus rests on a false portrayal of our beliefs.

**B. We Also Defend Traditional Marriage to Protect Vital Interests in the Welfare of Children, Families, and Society.**

Until the same-sex marriage controversy erupted, it was commonly accepted that children thrive best when reared by their mother and father. That truth cannot be negated by the purported finding that “same-sex couples can be just as responsible for a child’s welfare as the countless heterosexual couples across the nation.” *DeLeon*, 975 F.Supp.2d at 654. Under rational-basis review “a legislative choice is not subject to courtroom fact-finding and may be based on rational speculation unsupported by evidence or empirical data.” *FCC v. Beach Commc’ns*, 508 U.S. 307, 315 (1993) (citations omitted); *see also Paris Adult Theatre I v. Slaton*, 413 U.S. 49, 63 (1973) (The Fourteenth Amendment does not constrain State lawmaking “simply because there is no conclusive evidence or empirical data.”). The district court’s confident reliance on recent sociology erroneously presumed that, in exercising its authority to regulate the marital relation, the State is bound to defer to the current opinions of certain professional associations. “Nothing in the Constitution requires [Texas]

to accept as truth the most advanced and sophisticated [scientific] opinion.” *Alberts v. California*, 354 U.S. 475, 501 (1957) (Harlan, J., concurring in the result). And, of course, States may protect values “spiritual as well as physical, aesthetic as well as monetary.” *Berman v. Parker*, 348 U.S. 26, 33 (1954). Well-founded judgments, grounded in millennia of human experience, that society needs husband-wife marriage and the security it gives children furnish a “reasonably conceivable state of facts that could provide a rational basis” for distinguishing between opposite-sex and same-sex couples. *Beach Commc’ns*, 508 U.S. at 313.

**1. Procreation and Child-Rearing Ideally Occur Within a Stable Marriage Between a Man and a Woman.**

Counseling millions of people over countless years gives us unusual insight into the deeply personal, painful, and often fraught circumstances surrounding the breakdown of marriages and the costs of child-rearing out of wedlock. That vast experience deserves this Court’s consideration and respect, no less than some recent sociological studies and positions that have dominated the debate. Our experience affirms the benefits of husband-wife marriage for the protection of children and the good of society.



a. Sex between men and women presents a social challenge. “[A]n orderly society requires some mechanism for coping with the fact that sexual intercourse commonly results in pregnancy and childbirth.” *Morrison v. Sadler*, 821 N.E.2d 15, 25-26 (Ind. Ct. App. 2005) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Marriage provides “the important legal and normative link between heterosexual intercourse and procreation on the one hand and family responsibilities on the other. The partners in a marriage are expected to engage in exclusive sexual relations, with children the probable result and paternity presumed.” *Id.* at 26 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Husband-wife marriage thus “protects child well-being ... by increasing the likelihood that the child’s own mother and father will stay together in a harmonious household.”<sup>8</sup>

b. Our own experience, as well as social science, teaches that “family structure matters for children, and the family structure that helps children the most is a family headed by two biological parents in a

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<sup>8</sup> Maggie Gallagher, *(How) Will Gay Marriage Weaken Marriage As a Social Institution: A Reply to Andrew Koppelman*, 2 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 33, 50-51 (2004).

low-conflict marriage.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, “[a] family headed by two married parents who are the biological mother and father of their children is the optimal arrangement for maintaining a socially stable fertility rate, rearing children, and inculcating in them the [values] required for politically liberal citizenship.”<sup>10</sup>

Innate differences between men and women mean that “a child benefits from having before his or her eyes, every day, living models of what both a man and a woman are like.” *Hernandez*, 855 N.E.2d at 7; *see also Lofton v. Sec’y of Dep’t of Children and Family Servs.*, 358 F.3d 804, 819 (11th Cir. 2004) (“[C]hildren benefit from the presence of both a father and mother in the home.”). Mothers are critical for child development, of course, but research confirms the importance of fathers for successful child-rearing.<sup>11</sup> “The burden of social science evidence supports the idea that gender-differentiated parenting is important for

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<sup>9</sup> KRISTIN ANDERSON MOORE ET AL., CHILD TRENDS, MARRIAGE FROM A CHILD’S PERSPECTIVE: HOW DOES FAMILY STRUCTURE AFFECT CHILDREN AND WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT? 1-2 (June 2002), <http://www.childtrends.org/files/MarriageRB602.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew B. O’Brien, *Why Liberal Neutrality Prohibits Same-Sex Marriage: Rawls, Political Liberalism, and the Family*, 2012 BRIT. J. AM. LEG. STUD. 411, 414.

<sup>11</sup> *See, e.g.*, W. BRADFORD WILCOX ET AL., WHY MARRIAGE MATTERS (2d ed. 2005).

human development and that the contribution of fathers to childrearing is unique and irreplaceable.”<sup>12</sup>

**2. Limiting Marriage to Male-Female Couples Furthers Powerful State Interests.**

a. Children reared in family structures other than the stable husband-wife home with both biological parents “face higher risks of poor outcomes than do children in intact families headed by two biological parents.”<sup>13</sup> Such disadvantaged children bear a higher risk of experiencing poverty, suicide, mental illness, physical illness, infant mortality, lower educational achievement, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, unwed teen parenthood, lower life expectancy, and reduced intimacy with parents.<sup>14</sup>

The connections between such social pathologies and family structure are anything but impersonal statistics to us. We know all too well the personal tragedies associated with unwed parenting and family

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<sup>12</sup> DAVID POPENOE, LIFE WITHOUT FATHER: COMPELLING NEW EVIDENCE THAT FATHERHOOD & MARRIAGE ARE INDISPENSABLE FOR THE GOOD OF CHILDREN & SOCIETY 146 (1996).

<sup>13</sup> MOORE, *supra* note 9, at 6.

<sup>14</sup> *See generally* Brief Amici Curiae of James Q. Wilson et al., Legal and Family Scholars In Support of Appellees at 41-43, *In re Marriage Cases*, 183 P.3d 384 (Cal. 2008) (No. S147999), available at [http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Legal\\_Family\\_Scholars\\_Amicus\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.courts.ca.gov/documents/Legal_Family_Scholars_Amicus_Brief.pdf).

breakdown. We have seen boys, bereft of their fathers or any proper male role model, acting out in violence, joining gangs, and engaging in other destructive behavior. We have ministered to those boys in prisons where too many are consigned to live out their ruined lives. We have cared for and wept with victims left in their destructive wake. And we have seen young girls, deprived of the love and affection of a father, fall into self-destructive behaviors that too often result in pregnancy and out-of-wedlock birth—thereby cruelly repeating the cycle.

Only male-female relationships can create children. Children need their mothers *and* fathers. And society needs mothers *and* fathers to raise their children. That is why society needs the institution of male-female marriage and why Texas is right to specially protect and support it.

b. When it comes to marriage, the law is a teacher. “[L]aw is not just an ingenious collection of devices to avoid or adjust disputes and to advance this or that interest, but also a way that society makes sense of things.”<sup>15</sup> By reserving marriage for the relationship between a man and a woman, the law encourages socially optimal behavior

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<sup>15</sup> MARY ANN GLENDON, ABORTION AND DIVORCE IN WESTERN LAW: AMERICAN FAILURES, EUROPEAN CHALLENGES 7-8 (1987).

through an institution that supports and confirms the People’s deep cultural understanding—and the sociological truth—that stable mother-father marital unions are best for children. “Recognizing same-sex relationships as marriages would legally abolish that ideal. No civil institution would reinforce the notion that men and women typically have different strengths as parents; that boys and girls tend to benefit from fathers and mothers in different ways.”<sup>16</sup>

A gender-neutral definition of marriage changes its message and function by celebrating adult relationships rather than protecting children.<sup>17</sup> That shift would harness the law for the self-interest of those in power (adults). “One may see these kinds of social consequences of legal change as good, or as questionable, or as both. But to argue that these kinds of cultural effects of law do not exist, and need not be taken into account when contemplating major changes in family law, is to demonstrate a fundamental lack of intellectual

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<sup>16</sup> SHERIF GIRGIS, RYAN T. ANDERSON, & ROBERT P. GEORGE, *WHAT IS MARRIAGE?* 58 (2012).

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Ralph Wedgwood, *The Fundamental Argument for Same-Sex Marriage*, 7 J. POL. PHIL. 225, 225 (1999) (“The basic rationale for marriage lies in its serving certain legitimate and important interests of married couples.”).

seriousness about the power of law in American society.”<sup>18</sup> It was rational for Texas voters to conclude that transforming marriage into a relationship primarily directed at affirming the life choices of adults will deepen the devastating effects America has suffered over the last half-century with the devaluing of marriage as a child-centered institution.

**C. We Support Laws Protecting the Marriage Institution Against Judicial Redefinition.**

The Texas Marriage Amendment resembles dozens of State provisions reaffirming the man-woman definition of marriage, which were created through democratic “reflection and choice.”<sup>19</sup> “[Texas] voters acted in concert and statewide to seek consensus and adopt a policy on a difficult subject.” *Schuetz*, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*15. They amended their constitution not out of animus, but as a security against the potential alteration of Texas law by State courts or legislators. *See Kitchen v. Herbert*, No. 13-4178, 2014 WL 2868044, at \*1 (10th Cir. June 28, 2014) (Utah voters adopted a similar provision to prevent State courts from contriving a right to same-sex marriage). Like laws

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<sup>18</sup> INSTITUTE FOR AMERICAN VALUES, MARRIAGE AND THE LAW: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES 26 (2006).

<sup>19</sup> THE FEDERALIST NO. 1, at 3 (Jacob E. Cooke ed., 1961) (Alexander Hamilton).

banning assisted suicide, traditional marriage, “[t]hough deeply rooted ... [has] in recent years been reexamined and, generally, reaffirmed.” *Wash. v. Glucksberg*, 521 U.S. 702, 716 (1997).

## II. The Texas Amendment Reserving Marriage for a Man and a Woman Is Not an Invalid Expression of Animus.

None of these reasons behind our support for traditional marriage is rooted in hostility or animus. Each is sufficiently rational and legitimate to satisfy the Constitution. But we also want to underscore that allegations of animus play a sharply limited role in equal protection analysis.

### A. Allegations of Animus Are Relevant *Only* When a Law Can Be Explained Solely By Animus with No Legitimate Purpose.

Judicial inquiry into animus is an exception to the rule that a law will not be declared unconstitutional “on the basis of an alleged illicit legislative motive.” *United States v. O’Brien*, 391 U.S. 367, 383 (1968). Inquiring into animus to decide an equal protection claim serves the limited reason of “ensur[ing] that classifications are not drawn *for the purpose* of disadvantaging the group burdened by the law.” *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620, 633 (1996) (emphasis added). Merely showing that a challenged law suggests “negative attitudes” or “fear” toward a

group is insufficient to strike it down. *Bd. Trustees Univ. Ala. v. Garrett*, 531 U.S. 356, 367 (2001). “Although such biases may often accompany irrational (and therefore unconstitutional) discrimination, *their presence alone does not a constitutional violation make.*” *Id.* (emphasis added). Instead, it must be shown “that the decisionmaker ... selected or reaffirmed a particular course of action at least in part ‘because of,’ not merely ‘in spite of,’ its adverse effects upon an identifiable group.” *Personnel Adm’r of Mass. v. Feeney*, 442 U.S. 256, 279 (1979) (emphasis added). Only proof of hostility toward the affected group, unmixed with *any* legitimate purpose for the challenged classification, justifies striking down a law for impermissible animus. *See Bishop v. Smith*, Nos. 14-5003 & 14-5006, 2014 WL 3537847, at \*23 n.5 (10th Cir. July 18, 2014) (Holmes, J., concurring).

**B. Neither *Windsor* Nor *Romer* Justifies This Court in Construing the Texas Marriage Amendment As An Expression of Impermissible Animus.**

These limits on the animus inquiry characterized the Supreme Court’s approach in *Windsor* and *Romer*. *Windsor* struck down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (“DOMA”) as a “discrimination[ ] of an unusual character” requiring “careful consideration.” *United States v.*



*Windsor*, 570 U.S. \_\_\_, 133 S. Ct. 2675, 2693 (2013) (quoting *Romer*, 517 U.S. at 633). Only after concluding that Congress’s definition of marriage was “unusual”—a “federal intrusion” on the States’ “historic and essential authority to define the marital relation”—did the Court delve into “the design, purpose, and effect of DOMA” to determine whether the law was “motived by an improper animus or purpose.” *Id.* at 2692-93. Its purpose, the Court found, was to “impose restrictions and disabilities” on rights granted by those States that had chosen to recognize same-sex marriage. *Id.* at 2692.

Unlike DOMA, State laws like Texas’s that reaffirm the historic definition of marriage cannot be described as classifications of an “unusual character”: they are the historical and present norm. *Windsor* freely acknowledged that “marriage between a man and a woman no doubt had been thought of by most people as essential to the very definition of that term and to its role and function throughout the history of civilization” and “[t]he limitation of lawful marriage to heterosexual couples ... for centuries had been deemed both necessary and fundamental.” *Id.* at 2689. Also unlike DOMA, Texas laws reaffirming the ancient understanding of marriage are perfectly normal

because State laws regulating marriage *are* the norm—as the *Windsor* Court spent pages emphasizing. *See id.* at 2693 (describing authority over the marital relation as “a virtually exclusive province of the States”) (quoting *Sosna v. Iowa*, 419 U.S. 393, 404 (1975)). *Windsor* thus denies any basis for inquiring into alleged animus here because State marriage laws like Texas’s are not unusual in content or in the source of their authority.

*Windsor* did not create an independent right to same-sex marriage; it invalidated DOMA as a “federal intrusion” on the States’ “historic and essential authority to define the marital relation.” 133 S. Ct. at 2692. *Windsor* nowhere suggests that state laws memorializing the historical definition of marriage are invalid, much less announces a national right to same-sex marriage under the rubric of equal protection. In fact, the limited inquiry into animus has never produced a new constitutional right, given the Court’s injunction against “creat[ing] substantive constitutional rights in the name of guaranteeing equal protection of the laws.” *San Antonio Indep. Sch. Dist. v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1, 33 (1973).

*Romer* likewise offers no support for inquiring into allegations that the Texas Marriage Amendment is based on animus. There too, the Court said, the challenged discrimination was “unusual”—indeed “unprecedented.” *Romer*, 517 U.S. at 633. Animus fatally undermined the Colorado provision because “all that the government c[ould] come up with in defense of the law is that the people who are hurt by it happen to be irrationally hated or irrationally feared.” *Cook v. Gates*, 528 F.3d 42, 61 (1st Cir. 2008) (internal quotation omitted). Unlike the broad and novel provision struck down in *Romer*, the Texas Marriage Amendment “only made explicit a tacit rule that until recently had been universal and unquestioned for the entirety of our legal history as a country: that same-sex unions cannot be sanctioned as marriages by the State.” *Bishop*, 2014 WL 3537847, at \*27 (Holmes, J., concurring).

The Texas Marriage Amendment is “free from impermissible animus,” in short, because it merely “formalized a definition that every State had employed for almost all of American history, and it did so in a province the States had always dominated.” *Id.* at \*30.

**C. This Court Should Reject Arguments Invoking Animus as a Justification for Nullifying the Texas Marriage Amendment.**

Subjecting the Texas amendment to heightened scrutiny based on Plaintiffs' unfounded allegations of animus—a finding nowhere authorized by Supreme Court precedent when a challenged classification is not “unusual”—would have serious consequences.

*First*, such an approach would brand Texas voters as irrational or bigoted. Maligning their deeply held convictions would “demean[ ]” them, with “the resulting injury and indignity” of having their personal convictions condemned by a court and used as the basis for overturning laws they personally approved. *Windsor*, 133 S. Ct. at 2694, 2692; *see also Burwell*, 2014 WL 2921709, at \*28 (Kennedy, J., concurring) (citation omitted) (“free exercise [of religion] is essential in preserving [citizens'] own dignity and in striving for a self-definition shaped by their religious precepts.”). This “fearsome quality of animus jurisprudence,” *Bishop*, 2014 WL 3537847, at \*26 (Holmes, J., concurring), would unfairly stigmatize millions of Americans who believe that marriage between a man and a woman both reflects divine law and is best for society. *Cf. Burwell*, 2014 WL 2921709, at \*28 (Kennedy, J., concurring). Because “the law can be a teacher,” *Garrett*,

531 U.S. at 375 (Kennedy, J., concurring), baseless but frequent comparisons between opposition to same-sex marriage and racism<sup>20</sup> would condemn those who believe in traditional marriage as social and political outcasts.<sup>21</sup> That devastating result can be avoided only by following Justice Kennedy’s admonition—that “courts may not disempower the voters from choosing which path to follow.” *Schuetz*, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*14.<sup>22</sup>

*Second*, such a decision would seriously distort the established framework for deciding equal protection claims, which assigns “different levels of scrutiny to different types of classifications.” *Clark v. Jeter*, 486 U.S. 456, 461 (1988). Because sexual orientation does not

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<sup>20</sup> See William N. Eskridge, Jr., *The History of Same-Sex Marriage*, 79 VA. L. REV. 1419, 1507 (1993) (“Just as white supremacy is the ideology that undergirds excluding different-race couples from the institution of marriage, homophobia is the ideology that undergirds excluding same-sex couples from that same institution.”).

<sup>21</sup> See GIRGIS, ET AL., *supra* note 16, at 9 (“If civil marriage is redefined, believing what virtually every human society once believed about marriage—that it is a male-female union—will be seen increasingly as a malicious prejudice, to be driven to the margins of culture.”).

<sup>22</sup> Eschewing a constitutional interpretation that would deepen tensions over sexual orientation is consistent with the Supreme Court’s recent decisions in the sensitive areas of race and religion. See *Schuetz*, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*14 (rejecting an interpretation of the Equal Protection Clause under which “[r]acial division would be validated, not discouraged”); *Town of Greece*, 134 S. Ct. at 1819 (“A test that would sweep away what has so long been settled would create new controversy and begin anew the very divisions along religious lines that the Establishment Clause seeks to prevent.”) (citation omitted).

characterize a suspect class and same-sex marriage is not a fundamental right, “[a] century of Supreme Court adjudication under the Equal Protection Clause affirmatively supports the application of the traditional standard of review, which requires only that [State laws defining marriage] be shown to bear some rational relationship to legitimate state purposes.” *Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. at 40. Applying a different standard here, based on alleged animus when Texas law is not “unusual,” would distort the well-settled equal protection framework.

*Third*, denying the Texas Marriage Amendment the presumption of validity owed under rational basis review would deprive Texas voters of the benefits of federalism. For “[i]n the federal system States ‘respond, through the enactment of positive law, to the initiative of those who seek a voice in shaping the destiny of their own times.’” *Schuetz*, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*15 (internal quotations omitted). Silencing those democratic voices to appease spurious charges of animus would undo the choice of “[Texas] voters [who] exercised their privilege to enact laws as a basic exercise of their democratic power.” *Id.* This disenfranchisement would fall especially hard on faith communities, which by religious mission and tradition shoulder much of

the burden of sustaining a vibrant marriage culture and supporting families and individuals when marriages fail.<sup>23</sup>

### **III. The Texas Marriage Amendment Is Not Invalid Because It Was Influenced by Religious and Moral Viewpoints.**

We finally address the all-too-common argument that the Texas Marriage Amendment is invalid because it reflects the religious or moral views of voters who approved it. *See DeBoer v. Snyder*, 973 F.Supp.2d 757, 773 (E.D. Mich. 2014) (holding that a similar provision of Michigan law offended constitutional principles “prevent[ing] the state from mandating adherence to an established religion . . . or ‘enforcing private moral or religious beliefs without an accompanying secular purpose.’”) (internal quotation and citations omitted). That argument is so thoroughly flawed that a prominent advocate for same-sex marriage criticized it as “outside the space for legitimate disagreement.” Roy T. Englert, Jr., *Unsustainable Arguments Won’t Advance Case for Marriage Equality*, Nat’l L.J., Apr. 21, 2014, at 35. It’s easy to see why.

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<sup>23</sup> Striking down State marriage laws for animus also would be unjustly one-sided. Laws protecting traditional marriage no more imply animus toward same-sex couples than laws redefining marriage imply animus toward people of faith.

History provides the baseline for what practices the Establishment Clause prohibits, *see Town of Greece*, 134 S. Ct. at 1819, and American history brims with evidence that religion has contributed to the Nation’s formative developments—from the founding<sup>24</sup> to the abolition of slavery,<sup>25</sup> the fight for women’s suffrage,<sup>26</sup> and the civil rights movement.<sup>27</sup> Religious organizations and people of faith have always participated in the great questions of the day. Their support for laws preserving the institution of marriage is consistent with that familiar pattern of religion in American public life.

The Establishment Clause offers no excuse for departing from that pattern. It “may not be used as a sword to justify repression of religion

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<sup>24</sup> “[T]he Founding Fathers believed devotedly that there was a God and that the unalienable rights of man were rooted in Him.” *Sch. Dist. of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 212 (1963). That is why they amended the Constitution to secure religious liberty as America’s first freedom. *See* U.S. CONST. amend. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Lincoln’s presidential speeches were “suffused with” biblical references that inspired and sustained the fight to end slavery. WILLIAM LEE MILLER, *LINCOLN’S VIRTUES* 50 (2002).

<sup>26</sup> Susan B. Anthony argued that women’s suffrage would bring moral and religious issues “into the political arena” because such issues held special importance for women. Letter from Susan B. Anthony to Dr. George E. Vincent (Aug. 1904), *in* 3 *IDA HUSTED HARPER, LIFE AND WORKS OF SUSAN B. ANTHONY*, at 1294 (1908).

<sup>27</sup> Martin Luther King’s best-known speeches and writings relied on biblical language and imagery. *See, e.g.*, Martin Luther King, *I Have a Dream* (1963), *in* *I HAVE A DREAM: WRITINGS AND SPEECHES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD*, at 105-06 (James Melvin Washington ed., 1992).



or its adherents from any aspect of public life.” *McDaniel v. Paty*, 435 U.S. 618, 640-41 (1978) (Brennan, J., concurring in the judgment) (citations omitted); *see also Walz v. Tax Comm’n*, 397 U.S. 664, 670 (1970) (right to engage in “vigorous advocacy of legal or constitutional positions” belongs to “churches, as much as secular bodies and private citizens”). Certainly, courts have no warrant for pronouncing the religious beliefs of voters legitimate when they approve of redefining marriage and ignorant or hateful when they do not. *See Larson v. Valente*, 456 U.S. 228, 244 (1982).

Voiding the Texas Marriage Amendment because of its support by religious voters or organizations would operate as a forbidden “religious gerrymander,” indirectly “regulat[ing] ... [political participation] because it is undertaken for religious reasons.” *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye, Inc. v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520, 532 (1993) (citations omitted). Open hostility toward religion is “at war with our national tradition as embodied in the First Amendment’s guaranty of the free exercise of religion.” *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Bd. Educ. Sch. Dist.*, 333 U.S. 203, 211-12 (1948); *see also Bd. Educ. Westside Cnty Schs. v. Mergens*, 496 U.S. 226 (1990) at 248 (“[The Constitution] does not

license government to treat religion and those who teach or practice it ... as subversive of American ideals and therefore subject to unique disabilities.”) (internal quotation marks omitted). Justice Kennedy has reminded us that “[i]n our constitutional tradition, freedom means that all persons have the right to believe or strive to believe in a divine creator and a divine law.... Free exercise in this sense ... means, too, the right to express those beliefs and to establish one’s religious (or non-religious) self-definition *in the political, civic, and economic life of our larger community.*” *Burwell*, 2014 WL 2921709, at \*28 (Kennedy, J., concurring) (emphasis added).

Overturing the Texas Marriage Amendment because of the religious or moral views that influenced its enactment would strip Texas voters of their “fundamental right,” *Schuetz*, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*15, as free and equal citizens in our democracy to deliberate and decide a sensitive question—namely, the nature of marriage—that profoundly affects their common lives together. “Those who won our independence believed that ... freedom to think as you will and to speak as you think are means indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth” and that “public discussion is a political duty, and that

this should be a fundamental principle of the American government.” *Whitney v. California*, 274 U.S. 357, 375 (1927) (Brandeis, J., concurring) (footnote omitted). Voters of every opinion may freely support laws reflecting their own moral judgments about what is best for society. *See Harris v. McRae*, 448 U.S. 297, 319-20 (1980); *McGowan v. Maryland*, 366 U.S. 420, 422 (1961). And “no less than members of any other group, [religious Americans must] enjoy the full measure of protection afforded speech, association, and political activity generally.” *McDaniel*, 435 U.S. at 641 (Brennan, J., concurring in the judgment).

Similar principles guided the Supreme Court in its recent *Schuette* decision. There the Court declined to take “a difficult question from the reach of the voters,” who had approved a constitutional amendment banning the use of affirmative action in college admissions. *Schuette*, 2014 WL 1577512, at \*16. Justice Kennedy saw “serious First Amendment implications” in “remov[ing] that question “from the realm of public discussion, dialogue, and debate.” *Id.* He concluded that overturning the Michigan amendment would place “an unprecedented restriction on the exercise of a fundamental right ... to

speak and debate and learn and then, as a matter of political will, to act through a lawful electoral process.” *Id.* at \*15. For, as Justice Breyer pointed out, “the Constitution foresees the ballot box, not the courts, as the normal instrument for resolving differences and debates about the merits of [affirmative action] programs.” *Id.* at \*28 (Breyer, J., concurring in the judgment).

*Schuette* applies with equal force here. Nullifying the Texas Marriage Amendment because of the religious or moral views expressed by lawmakers who proposed it or voters who adopted it would abridge the fundamental right of citizens and their elected representatives to participate authentically in the processes of self-government *as believers*. For “[c]onflicting claims of morality ... are raised by opponents and proponents of almost every [legislative] measure.” *Dandridge v. Williams*, 397 U.S. 471, 487 (1970). From criminal laws, to business and labor regulations, environmental legislation, military spending, and universal health care—law and public policy are constantly based on notions of morality. *See, e.g., Heart of Atlanta Motel, Inc. v. United States*, 379 U.S. 241, 257 (1964) (collecting decisions upholding federal laws where “Congress was legislating

against moral wrongs”). Perhaps this is why President Obama recognized that “to say that men and women should not inject their ‘personal morality’ into public policy debates is a practical absurdity.”<sup>28</sup>

Religious liberty warrants special protection, not special burdens. The Constitution secures for every American the rights to rely on and to freely express their religious beliefs and other convictions when debating and making decisions about great matters of public controversy like same-sex marriage. Subjecting a law to greater judicial scrutiny because of the support it received from religious organizations and people of faith would indefensibly burden the exercise of those essential democratic rights. The Texas Marriage Amendment must be judged based on settled rules of law—not on a more demanding standard born of suspicion toward religion, religious believers, or their values.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Barack Obama, Call to Renewal Keynote Address (June 28, 2006), *available at* <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/28/us/politics/2006obamaspeech.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>.

<sup>29</sup> In addition to their constitutional rights, religious believers possess moral rights to express themselves on public issues in religious terms and to give or withhold their consent to coercive measures based on their religious convictions alone. *See* CHRISTOPHER J. EBERLE, RELIGIOUS CONVICTION IN LIBERAL POLITICS 333 (2002); ROBERT AUDI & NICHOLAS WOLTERSTORFF, RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE 94 (1997).

## CONCLUSION

Marriage understood as the union of one man and one woman remains a vital and foundational institution of civil society. The government's interests in continuing to encourage and support husband-wife marriage are not only legitimate but compelling. And religious institutions and persons who support husband-wife marriage do so not based on illicit animosity but on constitutionally-protected religious *and* rational judgments about what is best for society. The Texas Marriage Amendment and related laws should therefore be upheld, allowing the democratic conversation about marriage to continue.

DATED this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2014.

By: *s/* Richard A. Bordelon, Esq.

RICHARD A. BORDELON, ESQ.

*Counsel of Record*

RALPH J. AUCOIN, ESQ.

DENECHAUD AND DENECHAUD, L.L.P.

1010 Common Street, Ste. 3010

New Orleans, LA 70112

(504) 522-4756

[rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com](mailto:rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com)

Attorneys for *Amici Curiae* Religious Organizations

**CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE**

This brief complies with the type-volume limitation of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B) and 29(b) because it contains 6,902 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32 (a)(7)(B)(iii).

This brief complies with the requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32 (a)(6) and Fifth Circuit Rule 32 because it has been prepared in a proportionally-spaced typeface using Microsoft Office Word 2010 in 14-Point Century style in the body of the brief and 12-point Century style in the footnotes.

By: s/ Richard A. Bordelon, Esq.  
RICHARD A. BORDELON, ESQ.  
DENECHAUD AND DENECHAUD, L.L.P.  
1010 Common Street, Ste. 3010  
New Orleans, LA 70112  
(504) 522-4756  
[rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com](mailto:rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com)

Counsel of Record for *Amici Curiae*  
Religious Organizations

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on August 4, 2014, I electronically filed the foregoing corrected brief with the Clerk of the Court for the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit by using the CM/ECF system. I certify that all participants in the case are registered CM/ECF users and that service will be accomplished by the CM/ECF system.

By: s/ Richard A. Bordelon, Esq.  
RICHARD A. BORDELON, ESQ.  
DENECHAUD AND DENECHAUD, L.L.P.  
1010 Common Street, Ste. 3010  
New Orleans, LA 70112  
(504) 522-4756  
[rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com](mailto:rbordelon@denechaudlaw.com)

Counsel of Record for *Amici Curiae*  
Religious Organizations



**STATEMENTS OF INTEREST OF THE *AMICI***

*The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (“USCCB” or “Conference”) is a nonprofit corporation, the members of which are the Catholic Bishops in the United States. The USCCB advocates and promotes the pastoral teaching of the U.S. Catholic Bishops in such diverse areas of the nation’s life as the free expression of ideas, fair employment and equal opportunity for the underprivileged, protection of the rights of parents and children, the sanctity of life, and the nature of marriage. Values of particular importance to the Conference include the promotion and defense of marriage, the protection of the First Amendment rights of religious organizations and their adherents, and the proper development of the nation’s jurisprudence on these issues.

*The National Association of Evangelicals* (“NAE”) is the largest network of evangelical churches, denominations, colleges, and independent ministries in the United States. It serves 41 member denominations, as well as numerous evangelical associations, missions, nonprofits, colleges, seminaries, and independent churches. NAE serves as the collective voice of evangelical churches, as well as other church-related and independent religious ministries.

*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (“LDS Church”) is a Christian denomination with over 14 million members worldwide. Marriage and the family are central to the LDS Church and its members. The LDS Church teaches that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God, that the traditional family is the foundation of society, and that marriage and family supply the crucial relationships through which parents and children acquire private and public virtue. Out of support for these fundamental beliefs, the LDS Church appears in this case to defend the traditional, husband-wife definition of marriage.

*The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC)* is the moral concerns and public policy entity of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the nation’s largest Protestant denomination, with over 46,000 churches and 16 million members. The ERLC is charged by the SBC with addressing public policy affecting such issues as marriage and family, the sanctity of human life, ethics, and religious liberty. Marriage is a crucial social institution. As such, we seek to strengthen and protect it for the benefit of all.

*The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod* is the second largest Lutheran denomination in North America, with approximately 6,150 member congregations which, in turn, have approximately 2.4 million baptized members. The Synod believes that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman, *Genesis* 2:24-25, and that God gave marriage as a picture of the relationship between Christ and His bride the Church, *Ephesians* 5:32. As a Christian body in this country, the Synod believes it has the duty and responsibility to speak publicly in support of traditional marriage and to protect marriage as a divinely created relationship between one man and one woman.