

Spring Friends Meeting, of The Religious Society of Friends, and commonly known as “Quakers”, offers this declaration of our position on the North Carolina ballot measure regarding the proposed Marriage Protection Amendment.

We do not support the proposed amendment to the North Carolina Constitution prohibiting legal union or marriage of gay and lesbian couples. Our position is based upon religious, social, and legal principles.

As Quakers, we strive for a society free from discrimination based on race, creed, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation. The proposed amendment is in direct opposition to our principles of equality and tolerance for all persons who likewise strive for peaceful existence with one another. Our religious tradition supports families in all the various forms of which they are composed. By not supporting families of all configurations, our society sends the erroneous message that they are flawed or less than equal.

We hold that marriage is founded upon the ideal of divinely inspired, selfless love and commitment between two individuals. Rather than limit our expectations of what constitutes marriage, we believe that Love should be the principle attribute.

Our faith is founded upon the basis of Love for one another and the principle that there is that of God in every person. From a historical perspective, Friends themselves had at one time faced trials with regard to their rights to legally exist as married parties. An appreciation of this historical fact compels us to stand in sympathy with those who today seek a similar commitment but would be denied legal recognition of their marriage. To take any other stand would be hypocritical to our heritage as Friends and contrary to the foundational Love of our overall Faith.

From a societal perspective, legislation of this type alienates young people who are gay or lesbian. Recent media coverage on suicides of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender students accentuates the need for our society to prevent harassment and discrimination. Ensuring that the amendment does not pass is critical to prevent further tragedies to vulnerable young persons in our schools and society at large.

Legally, we acknowledge and support the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, which states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

To that end, we believe that marriage is a matter of religion rather than government and that the Government is to take no position regarding marriage, other than to guarantee the “free exercise thereof”.

Committed relationships can provide, to quote William Penn, "Shape, Strength, Courage and good Conditions." These benefits can be most effectively realized when the government refrains from determining who can and cannot enter into a committed relationship.

A constitution should define the operation of government and guarantee specific rights. It should be used to protect citizens, not to single out certain groups as unwelcome or immoral. To enshrine a prohibition on same-sex marriage in the State's Constitution would be a step in the wrong direction, weakening our position as a state that believes in freedom and equal rights.

In conclusion, we believe that the effort to divide our citizens for political purposes is detrimental to our state. We as a religious group urge all North Carolinians to reject the proposed amendment banning gay and lesbian civil union or marriage as it marginalizes and discriminates against some, and denies a basic right which should be afforded to all.

Approved by Spring Monthly Meeting this 15th day of 1st month, 2012

Cynthia Perry
Clerk of Spring Monthly Meeting

Ron Osborne
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