



## Vermont Marriage Advisory Council

PO Box 1566 ♦ Rutland, VT 05701 ♦ 802-775-6247 ♦ [www.vtmarriage.org](http://www.vtmarriage.org)

### The Price of Change

3-09-09

Are you a husband, wife, father, mother, grandmother, or grandfather? Are you about to be a bride, or a groom? Do you think such legal terms have value and meaning?

Fifty nine Vermont legislators apparently don't think so.

Vermont House bill H-178 seeks to legally redefine all references to such "gendered" terms forever in Vermont laws, replacing their natural, ancient meaning with artificial "gender-neutral" concepts such as "Party." In fact, the legal framework of marriage and family are about to be turned upside down...and neutered:

*Gender-specific terms relating to the marital relationship or familial relationships, including without limitation "spouse," "family," "marriage," "immediate family," "dependent," "next of kin," "bride," "groom," "husband," "wife," "widow," and "widower," shall be construed to be gender-neutral for all purposes throughout the law, whether in the context of statute, administrative or court rule, policy, common law, or any other source of civil law. (text from H-178)*

Why is Vermont doing this? The answer: to accommodate same-sex couples' desires for increased acceptance through same-sex, or "genderless" marriage. Potentially increased social acceptance is all that Vermont law can further provide, since legal scholars have asserted that same-sex couples cannot obtain any further legal benefits or protections by Vermont shifting from Civil Unions to marriage. Gay legal advocate and Vermont Law School Professor Greg Johnson admitted this when questioned by a legislatively appointed commission:

*"I'm an openly gay scholar, I'm a gay rights advocate, I support opening up marriage to same-sex couples. Yet my answer to your first question is that marriage licenses would deliver no more rights than a civil union license. Legally, civil union is exactly the same, and completely equal to marriage."*

Only Federal same-sex marriage could provide further legal benefits to Vermont gays; a reality made nearly impossible by thirty state constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage.

In a related attempt to accommodate same-sex marriage, the legal definition of “parent” in Vermont is also about to be redefined in a companion House bill H-181, which seeks to redefine parenthood based solely on the name(s) on a birth certificate. This bill seeks to sever the biological connection in determining parenthood (i.e. a child’s biological mother or father); a necessary step to accommodate the rapid growth of children created by same-sex couples using assisted reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination, egg donors, and gestational hosts – family structures which will be promoted through these proposed laws.

Marriage and family are at the center of every aspect of our society. Can we doubt that such dramatic changes will have profound ripple effects on our laws, culture, and children?

Civil Unions did not change marriage, but same-sex marriage will in many ways, most of which have been ignored by same-sex marriage supporters and legislators. By saying yes to same-sex marriage, Vermont will be saying that:

- ◆ Men and women are completely interchangeable
- ◆ Vermont no longer seeks to ensure that every child has a mother and a father through marriage.
- ◆ Anyone who believes this is unwise is a bigot

Same-sex marriage will legally revoke the promise inherent in marriage that every child should know and be raised by their mother and father, and would put us at odds with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child; a primary reason why France and Ireland said NO to same-sex marriage.

A true civil right never comes at the expense of another person. But same-sex marriage can only come at the cost of the bonding rights of a child to their own biological mother and father.

How many rights are you willing to give up for same-sex marriage, Vermont?