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THE SENATE MARRIAGE DEBATE: A SUMMARY

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*For the full text of the substantive speeches given on the Senate floor, see
www.marriedebate.com/pdf/senate_debate.pdf*

Introduction

What do Americans think about marriage? From Friday, July 9 through Wednesday, July 14, 2004, the U.S. Senate conducted a public debate on the Federal Marriage Amendment.¹ The speeches are an unusual example of public debate about the purpose of marriage, its place in the Constitution and its role in our public life, among other topics. What follows are excerpts from all 50 senators who made substantive speeches on the marriage amendment during the July floor debate.

Senators Who Voted in Favor of FMA:

***Wayne Allard (R-CO), sponsor of
SJ-40 and author of FMA:***

“This is not some controversial ideology being forced upon an unwilling populace by the Government. It is in fact the opposite. Marriage is the ideal held by the people and Government has long reflected

this. The broadly embraced union of a woman and a man is understood to be the ideal union from which people live and children best blossom and thrive” (S7871).²

“To those who believe that our marriage protection amendment is discriminatory, I ask them this: Do you truly believe that marriage, the traditional and foundational union between a man and a woman, is discrimination? Is it discrimination to hold as ideal that a child should have both a mother and a father?” (S7873).

Sam Brownback (R-KS), co-sponsor:

“Let us be clear, this is not a battle over civil rights; it is a battle over whether marriage will be emptied of its meaning in contradiction to the will of the people and their duly elected representatives. We are a democracy, not a people ruled by a judicial dictator. In order to reach a predetermined outcome with regard to marriage, judges such as the five judges responsible for the Goodridge decision in Massachusetts are disregarding thousands of years of custom and experience, the laws of every society, and the beliefs of every major religious tradition. Unless action is taken by Congress to protect marriage by means of a constitutional amendment, the marriage laws of 50 States will be at the mercy of Federal

¹ Calendar No. 620, 108th Congress, 2d Session, S. J. Res. 40. (“Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman.”) The vote of Wednesday, July 14, was a vote on a cloture motion on the motion to proceed to S. J. Res. 40.

² All parenthetical citations refer to the 108th Congress, 2d Session, 150 Cong. Rec.

judges, and marriage itself will be redefined out of all recognition” (S7925).

“Marriage is at the center of the family, and the family is the basis of society itself. The Government’s interest in the marriage bond, and the reason it treats heterosexual unions in a manner unlike all other relationships, is closely related to the welfare of children. Government registers and endorses marriage between a man and a woman in order to ensure a stable environment for the raising and nurturing of children. Social science on this matter is conclusive: Children need both a mom and a dad” (S7926).

Jim Bunning (R-KY):

“Mothers and fathers both matter to children. Only a man and a woman have the ability to create children. It is the law of nature. No matter how much some might not like it or want to change it or push for technology to replace it, this law is irrefutable. It is upon this law that so much of our society and our cultural institutions are based – families, communities, work, schools....

“Traditional marriage has been central to the understanding of family in Western culture from the very beginning, and the central reason for marriage has been for the rearing of children” (S7913).

Robert Byrd (D-WV), voted ‘Yea’ but spoke against the FMA as written:

“While I strongly support, and will continue to staunchly defend, efforts to strengthen and preserve marriage in our society, I oppose amending the U.S. Constitution based on the resolution that is before this Senate. The resolution is rife with contradictions and ambiguities that would, with certainty, lead to nothing but confusion and endless litigation in the future...” (S8084).

John Cornyn (R-TX), co-sponsor:

“I worry that the American family will not be able to sustain itself against this

continued attempt to marginalize the importance of traditional families and the importance of every child having a loving and supportive mother and father, which we all know as a matter of common sense, a matter of observation, and as a matter of social science is the optimal situation for a child to be raised and grow up in” (S7884).

Larry Craig (R-ID), co-sponsor:

“Some opponents speak of this proposed amendment as an attempt to take rights away. That is neither the purpose nor effect of S.J. Res. 40. Amending our Constitution is the way the people can correct the courts when the courts get an issue wrong. For instance, the states ratified the Thirteenth Amendment 7 short years after the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, righting the wrong of slavery that had been perpetuated by the courts....

“We need to pass this amendment for the sake of children. Marriage encourages people to organize in the way that is best for those who may issue from, or enter into, that relationship, according to researchers studying family structures for raising children. This amendment does not criticize or undermine other kinds of families, but it acknowledges society’s interest in promoting traditional marriage as the environment for child rearing” (S8086).

Pete Domenici (R-NM):

“The Federal marriage amendment that we are considering today would ensure that the state legislatures, as elected representatives of the people entrusted with the legislative powers, get to decide. It is also important to remember: from a procedural standpoint, passage of a constitutional amendment by the Senate and the House of Representatives is only the first step” (S8083).

John Ensign (R-NV):

“Single parents are doing right by their children. Single parents, like my mom, deserve to be praised. But those

circumstances are not the ideal in which to raise children. Marriage is that ideal....

“When I was nine, my mom met and married the man who is my dad. With their marriage, there was finally someone in our home who was a strong male role model for me and my brother. I finally had a positive example of what it meant to be a father and a husband. Someone I could look up to and someone I could emulate. My dad’s presence in our house made an immediate impact on me in a way that my mother alone simply could not. His presence also impacted me in ways that have helped me love and care for my own wife and my own children” (S7968).

“The presence of a mother and father in the life of a child is crucial. Mothers and fathers bring their own special qualities to their own relationship and to the approach they take to raise their children. It has been said that a boy will look to his mother as the type of woman he wants to marry and his father as the model for how to treat her. For that reason, and so many more, children need both a father and mother. That is the universally recognized ideal on which marriage is based” (*Ibid.*).

Michael Enzi (R-WY), co-sponsor:

“Marriage is the union of a man and a woman in a partnership aimed at producing children and nurturing their growth and development. It is not about social acceptance, or about economic benefits, or an exercise in civil rights, as some would try to lead us to believe. A civil union, on the other hand, is a legal agreement that establishes a partnership between two people of the same sex to ensure their rights as ‘partners’ are preserved in the eyes of the law. A civil union is concerned with matters like the right to an inheritance, retirement, death benefits, health insurance and the like. Marriage is concerned with matters involving the birth and raising of children. That is the main difference between the two. Simply put, life comes from the marriage of

a man and a woman. No life can come from a civil union” (S8081).

“[W]hen we convert marriage into a civil right for the sole purpose of indulging a perceived ‘protected sphere of individual sexual autonomy,’ as some courts have tried to do, we abandon hope, not just for ourselves, but especially for future generations. If we lose our connection across the generations that have held marriage dear for so long and, as a result, the hearts of fathers and mothers are no longer turned to their children, and the hearts of children are no longer turned to their fathers and mothers, we will have suffered a great and terrible loss, indeed” (S8082).

Bill Frist (R-TN), Majority Leader and co-sponsor:

“Children need moms and dads. Marriage recognizes and addresses that need.

“Yes, marriage is about love. But it is also crucially about pointing men and women to the kind of loving union that binds them together and to their children. Far from strengthening the family, separating marriage from childbearing and child rearing undermines the family and distorts what we teach our children about the meaning of adult commitment, responsibility, mutual loyalty” (S7886).

Orrin Hatch (R-UT), co-sponsor:

“Decoupling procreation from marriage in order to make some people feel more accepted denies the very purpose of marriage itself. Marriages between men and women are the essential institutions to which future generations are produced and reared. Political communities are only as solid as their foundation, and these families and homes, the first schoolyards of citizenship, are essential for the future of republican government” (S7879).

“I do not doubt alternative families can lovingly raise children, but decades of study

show children do best when raised by a father and a mother” (S7880).

Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), co-sponsor:

“I do not think many would disagree that the traditional concept of marriage is what must be protected. Traditional marriage has been the foundation of our families for generations, in fact, centuries. It is best for our children now, and is the best chance our children have for brighter futures” (S7961).

James Inhofe (R-OK), co-sponsor:

“Our laws protect marriage between a man and a woman, not because of love or romance, but because marriage provides a good, strong, stable environment for raising children and is good for society as a whole. The evidence of the benefits to children being raised by a mother and father is overwhelming.

“In societies where marriage has been redefined, potential parents become less likely to marry and out-of-wedlock births increase. This is because marriage loses its unique status in society as the institution where childbearing and parenting is centered. It becomes little more than an optional arrangement, not the presumptive locus of family life” (S7967).

Jon Kyl (R-AZ), co-sponsor:

“[T]raditional marriage – marriage as the union between a man and a woman – exists, first and foremost, as the best environment for the protection and nurturing of children. Traditional families are where we hope the children will be born and raised, and where we expect them to receive their values. And we hope these things for a good reason....

“I believe traditional marriage is an institution worth saving, and I believe we send a very important message to our children when we stand up for the institution of marriage. We tell them that marriage matters; that traditional family life is a thing

to be honored, valued, and protected. We tell them marriage is the best environment for raising children, and we tell them every child deserves a mother and a father. We point them to the ideal and that the radical redefinition of marriage through the court threatens this ideal” (S7914).

Trent Lott (R-MS), co-sponsor:

“[M]arriage is meant to affirm the ideal model in which to bring up the next generation. Mothers and fathers both matter, and both make critical contributions in the lives of children. A man and a woman united in marriage can uniquely provide the many different attributes that children need as they are reared to become our next generation, and both make important contributions” (S7924).

Mitch McConnell (R-KY), co-sponsor:

“Two decades of modern social science have arrived at the conclusion borne out by at least two millennia of human experience: that family structure matters for children and hence for society, and the family structure that helps children the most is a family headed by a mom and a dad. There is thus value for children in promoting strong, stable marriages between biological parents” (S8088).

Don Nickles (R-OK):

“We are dealing with something very fundamental when we are talking about how marriage is defined. Marriage is a very esteemed union between a man and a woman, a contract with Government recognition, with benefits, a sacred union, a sacrament in some religions, a very special relationship, not to be changed or altered, frankly, by a 4-to-3 decision, by an unelected court, trying to redefine something so important. It should be decided by elected officials” (S7996).

Rick Santorum (R-PA), co-sponsor:

“[I]f we look at this next generation of marriage, what is that? Is it about the selfless or is it about the selfish definition?

Is it about children? Certainly a change in the definition of traditional marriage to include people of the same sex is not about children, it is about adults. That further takes us away from the central principal purpose of marriage, which is the bonding of a man and a woman for the purpose of creating a union by which children for the next generation are born. So we continue to get further away from the ideal, and when we do that, children suffer and cultures die” (S7907).

“To get to the bottom line of this debate, the bottom line is children need mothers and fathers, and society should be all about that. Society should be all about creating the best possible chance for children to have a mother and a father. Unless the State endorses that, unless our laws enforce that, then I think it is fairly obvious that our culture will not, and that left to our own devices, as these authors say, we will simply not have these unions” (S7907).

“[I]f society doesn’t encourage marriage and fidelity between a man and a woman, the natural inclination is certainly...not to be faithful, not to be responsible fathers, not to be involved with a woman for a long-term commitment. This is something which, if not nurtured by culture, could cause us to evolve very quickly into a rather self-absorbed, self-centered culture, with men being the principal stirrer of that lethal cocktail in America” (S7924).

Jeff Sessions (R-AL), co-sponsor:

“The reason a State has an interest in preserving marriage, traditional marriage, is because children are produced in that arrangement. Out of that arrangement a new generation is born, raised, nurtured, trained, and educated. We need to affirm that....

“We ought to be passing laws that encourage marriage, not discourage it. We ought to be, as a policymaking body, involved in establishing policies that affirm that relationship. We know scientifically, we know intuitively, and we know morally that this is the better way” (S7888).

Gordon Smith (R-OR):

“[I]t is a fact that not all children have the opportunity of a family with a mother and a father, though what marriage does as a legal institution is to say to children here and those yet unborn that there is a legal framework in which they can enjoy protection and have the society of a mother and a father.

“It is clear as we wrestle with this sensitive issue, it is clear to the conscience of the American people that boys and girls need moms and dads. Not all get them, but the law has provided a framework for it. Those children who do not have it should also enjoy legal protections not unlike those that are enjoyed in the institution of marriage” (S7873).

“Marriage is a word. Words have meaning. Few words have more meaning to our culture and our future and our civilization than marriage because marriage ultimately is about more than just consenting adults. It is about the natural rearing and nurturing of children, preparing them for citizenship under the most ideal circumstances possible” (*Ibid*).

Arlen Specter (R-PA), voted ‘Yea’ but spoke against FMA:

“[I]t is premature to consider altering the Constitution, the most successful organic document in history which has preserved and enshrined the values of our Nation. If the States cannot preserve the sanctity of marriage between a man and a woman, I would consider an amendment to the U.S. Constitution” (S8087).

James Talent (R-MO), co-sponsor:

“No human society, no human institution is perfect. A spouse may die. The marriage may break up. The marriage may be so completely dysfunctional that maybe it ought to break up. People sometimes are single when children are born, and very often in those circumstances the person who is raising the child is able to make it work.

They act heroically to raise the child on their own.

“If a child in that circumstance went to his mom or dad or aunt or uncle or grandma or grandpa or guardian, whoever was trying to raise him or her on his own and said, When I grow up, when I want to have children, would you recommend that I try and find somebody who is committed to raising the child – say it is a girl – if I try and find a man who is committed to me and committed to the home and committed to raising our children in that context, would you recommend that I do that or not? How many of those single moms or dads or grandmas or grandpas or aunts or uncles who have raised kids or are raising kids, how many would say, No, do it the other way? They would say: Do it that way, if you can” (S7959).

“[M]arriage is the institution—remember, it is many things; yes, it is an expression of love and commitment between two people and that is beautiful—that we in our society rely upon for raising our children. And it is best for kids, if possible and where possible, to have a mom and a dad. And that is one thing that two people of the same sex cannot give children. They cannot give them a mom and a dad” (S7960).

John Warner (R-VA):

“I unequivocally support the first sentence, as I said. The time-honored tradition of marriage between a man and a woman ought to be protected in light of the attacks by certain opportunists in the judiciary on this time-honored part of our culture and heritage, a culture and heritage that our Nation, a young nation, shares with nations far older than ours.

“Again, the second sentence gives me this pause, despite the statements by many of my colleagues to indicate what they believe the intent is. I do not think it speaks to the clarity that the public is entitled to and wants, and this could lead to a great deal of confusion among the American public, and I

do not want to create that confusion. It could lead to considerable litigation” (S7990).

Senators Who Voted Against FMA

Barbara Boxer (D-CA):

“However we feel about gay marriage or civil unions or domestic partnerships, however we feel on those matters, what is more of a threat to you and your family? You need to ask that question, put aside politics, and whatever answer you come up with, I have to believe most would say al-Qaida, not Mary and Carol or Jim and Carl, but al-Qaida, people whose names we do not know” (S7955)

Thomas Carper (D-DE):

“I hope when we finish today and this issue is behind us for a while, that we will turn to another closely related issue that will truly strengthen America’s families. That is, to return to the issue of welfare reform and pass the legislation out of committee and send it to the House. Let’s get on with the Nation’s business” (S8068).

Hillary Clinton (D-NY):

“I believe marriage is not just a bond but a sacred bond between a man and a woman. I have had occasion in my life to defend marriage, to stand up for marriage, to believe in the hard work and challenge of marriage. So I take umbrage at anyone who might suggest that those of us who worry about amending the Constitution are less committed to the sanctity of marriage, or to the fundamental bedrock principle that exists between a man and a woman, going back into the midst of history as one of the foundational institutions of history and humanity and civilization, and that its primary, principal role during those millennia has been the raising and socializing of children for the society into which they become adults....

“I think that if we were really concerned about marriage and that we believed it had a role in the Federal Constitution, we have

been missing in action. We should have been in this Chamber trying to amend our Constitution to take away at the very first blush the idea of no-fault divorce, try to get in there and tell the States what they should and should not do with respect to marriage and divorce, maybe try to write an amendment to the Constitution about custody matters. Maybe we should have it be a presumption in our Federal marriage law that joint custody is the rule. Maybe we ought to just substitute ourselves for States, for judges, for individuals who are making these decisions every single day throughout our Nation....

“Is it really marriage we are protecting? I believe marriage should be protected. I believe marriage is essential, but I do not, for the life of me, understand how amending the Constitution of the United States with respect to same-gender marriages really gets at the root of the problem of marriage in America. It is like my late father used to say: It is like closing the barn door after the horse has left” (S7994).

Susan Collins (R-ME):

“It is my strong personal belief that marriage is between a man and a woman. Second, principles of federalism dictate that the right and the responsibility to define marriage belong to the States. Third, the proper role of the Federal Government is to ensure that each State can exercise that right and responsibility by preventing, as the Defense of Marriage Act does, one State from imposing its view on others.

“The amendment under consideration would potentially affect two types of relationships that are fundamental to our society. The first is the union between a man and a woman. The second is the compact between the States and the Federal Government. In our zeal to protect the former, we must not do unnecessary violence to the latter, as it is the bedrock of our country’s unique and highly successful Federal system” (S8085).

Kent Conrad (D-ND):

“My record as a steadfast supporter of traditional marriage and strong family values is clear and consistent. I believe marriage should be reserved to relationships between a man and a woman....

“Because the Defense of Marriage Act is the law of the land and has never been found to have any constitutional problems, I do not believe a constitutional amendment is needed. For that reason, despite my strong support for marriage, I will vote against the proposed constitutional amendment” (S8080).

Jon Corzine (D-NJ):

“Regret is a key word when it comes to this amendment, for several reasons.

“It is regrettable that, in this case, the United States Senate is debating an amendment that intends to turn a revered, sacred document into a political weapon.

“It is unfortunate that a misinformation campaign about the consequences of this amendment has been waged upon the American public by organizations that want to play politics at the expense of gay and lesbian Americans” (S8079).

Tom Daschle (D-SD), Minority Leader:

“There is no argument, in my view, among many of us, most of us, about whether a marriage ought to be between a man and a woman. It ought to. The real question is whether or not we ought to amend the U.S. Constitution, and then if we open it up to amendment, whether we ought to amend it in other ways as well, including campaign finance reform, maybe victims’ rights, maybe limitations on the first amendment” (S7930).

Mark Dayton (D-MN):

“It is a tragic day in America when politicians exploit the Constitution of the United States to get themselves reelected. It is a tragic day for millions of Americans who are being exploited by those politicians. This is a hurtful, hateful, harmful debate for America, one that only will get uglier,

meaner, more divisive, and more dangerous if it moves on to State legislatures as the constitutional amendment requires....

“If marriage belongs to God, as I believe it does, then our separation of church and state government should not interfere with its administration by the properly chosen religious authorities. Instead, government should adopt a different term to use for the legal rights and responsibilities under a civil contract, which I believe any two adults should equally be able to enter into. Giving marriage back to the churches, synagogues, and mosques and separating it from government is marriage’s salvation and society’s solution.

“Let us direct our efforts to protecting America from al-Qaida. Leave the Constitution alone and leave marriage to God” (S7991).

Christopher Dodd (D-CT):

If the proposed Federal marriage amendment is adopted and we are to deny rather than confer rights upon individuals, I believe it will be a step backward for all Americans concerned with the Constitution and the intended purpose of it. It would be difficult to imagine what our Federal Constitution would look like today if we had adopted constitutional amendments at the rate they are being currently proposed” (S8073).

Byron Dorgan (D-ND):

“I also agree with those who say that marriage is an institution that should be reserved for a man and a woman living as a husband and wife. I voted for that position when I supported the Defense of Marriage Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996. That is now Federal law and it clearly defines the institution of marriage for our country....

“[T]he only State in our country where same-sex marriages are now being performed is Massachusetts. But that State’s legislature has begun a process to amend the State’s constitution to prohibit same-sex

marriages. When that is done, there will be no jurisdiction in America where same-sex marriages will be legal. I believe that the State governments, as has been the case for over two centuries, are resolving this issue in a manner that protects the institution of marriage as one that applies only to men and women united as husband and wife. Because of that, there is no need at this time to amend the United States Constitution” (S8081).

Richard Durbin (D-IL):

“There is no controversy that brings us to the floor today” (S7969).

“Historically, our amendment process has been to expand the rights and liberties of Americans, African Americans, women, and others to give them voice in the democratic process. This would be the second time in history in which we would restrict the rights of Americans. The other time, as I mentioned earlier, we said with the prohibition amendment that we would restrict the right to sell liquor and alcoholic beverages in America. That is the one other time we did it. We did it because of a temperance crusade brought on by some religious groups and others, and then realized a few years later that it was wrong. This would be only the second time in history when we would use the amendment process to restrict the rights of American citizens” (S7970).

Russell Feingold (D-WI):

“I am saddened...to be standing on the floor today debating a constitutional amendment that is inconsistent with our Nation’s history of expanding freedom and liberty” (S7962).

Diane Feinstein (D-CA):

“I believe this is a waste of time.

“For the life of me, I don’t understand what honest motive there is in putting this in front of this body to philosophically debate marriage on a constitutional amendment that is not going to happen, and which is

enormously divisive in all of our communities” (S7909).

James Jeffords (I-VT):

“I find it sad and unfortunate that the Senate is spending crucial time on this divisive issue, driven so obviously by partisan politics rather than sound public policy” (S7997).

Tim Johnson (D-SD):

“I strongly support, and have voted for, Federal legislation that defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman; however, there is no need at this time to take the extraordinary step of amending our Constitution. Since 1996, Federal law has allowed the respective States to refuse to recognize another State’s gay marriage laws, and it also expresses the congressional view that the institution of marriage should be limited to a union between a man and a woman.

“I have recently been contacted by a great many religious organizations, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, ELCA, my own denomination, as well as the Alliance of Baptists, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the United Church of Christ, among others, asking me to oppose this proposed constitutional amendment. While I do not “take orders” from any religious group, including my own, this does confirm that my opposition to this amendment is consistent with the views of millions of devout Christians throughout South Dakota and America” (S8084).

Edward Kennedy (D-MA):

“The rabid reactionary religious right has rarely looked more ridiculous. They know they don’t have the votes to come even close to passing this amendment, but they have a sufficient stranglehold on the White House and the Republican leadership in Congress to force the issue to a vote anyway, in a desperate effort to arouse their narrowminded constituency and somehow gain an advantage in the elections this year.

My guess is their strategy will boomerang and that vastly more Americans will be turned off than are turned on by this appeal to stain the Constitution with their language of bigotry” (S7988).

“I happen to be someone who supports the court decision in Massachusetts. I am proud of them” (S7989).

“The true threat to religious freedom is posed by the Federal marriage amendment itself, which would tell churches they cannot consecrate a same-sex marriage, even though some churches are now doing so. The amendment would flagrantly interfere with the decisions of religious communities and undermine the longstanding separation of church and state in our society....

“There is no justification for attempting to undermine the separation of church and state in our society or to write discriminations against gays and lesbians in the U.S. Constitution” (*Ibid.*).

Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ):

“This is gay bashing, plain and simple. That is what this is about. This amendment is picking on productive members of our society, people who pay taxes, want to raise their families and contribute to their communities, as everyone else does. They want to be like everyone else in their conformity to law. This amendment attempts to divide America and it is shameful. It should not be that way” (S7979).

Patrick Leahy (D-VT):

“For 215 years, we have left it up to States to define marriage. All of a sudden, are we going to tell them they do not know what they are doing? Are we going to take over the marriage issue from the States and define it for them? Are we going to treat this as a matter of urgency, that we must proceed to immediately while setting aside homeland security and the budget?” (S7881).

Carl Levin (D-MI):

“What is meant by ‘the legal incidents thereof’? Does this provision ban civil

unions? Does it forbid States from allowing people in same-sex relationships to have the (spousal) right to visit their partners in hospitals? Does it bear on rules governing insurance? At first glance, the term ‘legal incidents thereof’ appears to forbid States from making cautious steps in the direction of permitting civil unions. And does the word ‘require’ include ‘permit’? Or consider the recent Allard amendment, which says that neither the federal Constitution nor any state Constitution shall be construed to require that marriage or ‘the legal incidents thereof’ must be ‘conferred’ on same-sex marriages. The most serious difficulty is that the words ‘legal incidents thereof’ raise the same questions about civil unions and spousal benefits and privilege” (S8083).

Joseph Lieberman (D-CT):

“Marriage is an issue best left to the States in our constitutional and legal frameworks” (S8072).

“Let me be clear. I believe marriage is a legal status that should be granted only to the union of one man and one woman. I believe that because I also believe the marriage of a man and a woman is the best way to sustain the human race, through the procreation and rearing of children. Therefore, it is in the interest of our society to attach special benefits to the relationship of a man and a woman joined together in marriage. That is why I voted for DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act, in 1996, and that is why I still support that law today.

“DOMA makes absolutely clear that marriage, under Federal law, which is our area of jurisdiction, is a status that should be attainable only by one man and one woman, and that any State’s decision to define marriage otherwise has no effect on marriage under Federal law or the laws of other States” (S8072).

John McCain (R-AZ):

“If a constitution is to be amended, it should be a State constitution. According to a report by the Heritage Foundation, an

organization not known for its liberal sympathies, ‘the best way to defend against a state court that might seek to overturn State public policy or force recognition of another state’s marriage policy is to amend the State constitution to establish a state constitutional marriage policy.’” (S7999).

Barbara Mikulski (D-MD):

“Marriage is not under a threat. It is not in any clear, imminent danger of being destroyed. What is in clear and imminent danger and what we have heard is under threat of possible attack is the homeland” (S7981).

Patty Murray (D-WA):

“With all the challenges we as a country currently face, this is one of the last things on which the Senate should be working. This is election-year politics pure and simple, in its crassest and worst form” (S8080).

Ben Nelson (D-NE):

“Let me be clear. I support the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. I fully support the concept of marriage as a sacred and solemn social institution. I support the Nebraska constitutional amendment on marriage and I support the Federal law defending marriage. But, I am not convinced we need a Federal constitutional amendment on this issue at this time (S8082).

Jack Reed (D-RI):

“Many of my constituents are gays and lesbians in long-term relationships. While I myself believe civil unions are perhaps the best place to begin to publicly acknowledge these relationships, I want to recognize that the impetus behind the push for gay marriage comes from a desire for security and serious, committed relationships by many adult Americans....

“The States are simply the correct place for the regulation of marriage, and this kind of election-year politicking, which suggests an intolerance toward many of our

constituents and neighbors, is plain wrong” (S8120).

Harry Reid (D-NV):

“It is my understanding we have not had hearings before the Judiciary Committee where they should have gone on. The Senate Chamber is not the place to do what committees are there to do....

“It goes without saying it will not wind up being very pleasant if, in fact, we ever got to the resolution itself and this amendment were open to the amendment process. Everyone knows if that happens, this amendment would be bogged down with Christmas-tree-like ornaments called amendments” (S7904).

Charles Schumer (D-NY):

“We stand on the floor today debating an amendment to the Constitution for which there is already a statute that does the same thing. We are ignoring basic needs. Instead of debating this amendment, why aren’t we debating homeland security?” (S7985).