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In Defense of Marriage -President Bush Makes the Case

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In making his case, the President cited “an overwhelming consensus in our country for protecting the institution of marriage.”

The President’s public announcement was prompted by events in San Francisco, where Mayor Gavin Newsom is defying California law by granting marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Over 3,000 homosexual couples have been “married” in San Francisco, and the courts have thus far refused to intervene. Similar acts of civil disobedience have taken place in New Mexico, and Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago has announced his support for homosexuals desiring to marry. The background also includes the unprecedented decision handed down by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in November, instructing the state’s legislature to legalize homosexual marriages by May.

“In recent months . . . some activist judges and local officials have made an aggressive attempt to redefine marriage,” the President explained. “And unless action is taken, we can expect more arbitrary court decisions, more litigation, more defiance of the law by local officials, all of which adds to uncertainty.”

The President began his speech by citing the Defense of Marriage Act passed by Congress by an overwhelming margin and signed into law by President Clinton in 1996. He pledged that his administration would “vigorously defend this act of Congress.” The administration had better be ready to do just that. As the President explained, “there is no assurance that the Defense of Marriage Act will not, itself, be struck down by activist courts.” Furthermore, the Defense of Marriage Act does not prevent state or local governments from redefining marriage, even if upheld.

President Bush conceded that the constitutional amendment process is not to be undertaken lightly. Nevertheless, “The amendment process has addressed many serious matters of national concern. And the preservation of marriage rises to this level of national importance.”

The response to the President’s speech was vitriolic and fully predictable. Massachusetts Senator John F. Kerry, the front-runner for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination, accused the President of using the marriage proposal as “a wedge issue to divide the American people.” Kerry, one of only 14 senators to vote against the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, claims to support civil unions for homosexuals while saying that he opposes gay marriage. Of course, Kerry does not “oppose” gay marriage in any meaningful sense, for he simply calls for the matter to be left to the states. His position is an evasion posing as principle.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, also of Massachusetts, said: “This nation has made too much progress in the ongoing

battle for civil rights to take such an unjustified step backwards now.” Representative Jerrold Nadler, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution accused the President of “trying to write discrimination into the Constitution, for the first time amending our sacred document to deny civil rights to a large number of Americans.” The President’s support for a constitutional amendment to defend marriage is “shameful,” Nadler said.

The statements by Nadler, Kennedy, and Kerry indicate the direction the Democrats will take in opposing the Federal Marriage Amendment. Nadler’s statement implies that the Constitutional presumably grants homosexuals a “right” to marry— a “right” no one seems to have found until just now. The rhetoric of the Left will label the marriage amendment as a form of discrimination that “takes away” individual rights and is a step backwards in the nation’s unceasing march toward total personal liberation.

The nation’s editorial writers piled on the President. The Washington Post accused the President of “debasing the Constitution,” arguing that since the Defense of Marriage Act has not [yet] been struck down by the courts, calls for a constitutional amendment are “reckless.” This is a dishonest argument, of course, for the paper endorses gay marriage and does not support the Defense of Marriage Act [DOMA] in the first place. The Left knows full well that once the DOMA is struck down, gay marriage will be a reality, and the horse will have, proverbially speaking, left the barn.

The New York Times asserted that the proposed amendment would “inject meanspiritedness and exclusion into the document embodying our highest principles and aspirations,” and argued that the President “proposes to radically rewrite the Constitution.”

The President, the Times opined, “tried to create a sense of crisis” in his speech defending marriage. Tried to create a crisis? The Times has been out of touch with mainstream Americans for a long time now, but this defies all logic and common sense. Mayor Newsom of San Francisco is handing out marriage licenses to gay couples and holding public wedding receptions. Courts all around the nation are poised to destroy civilization’s most fundamental institution, and legislators dither while marriage burns. And President Bush is guilty of creating a sense of crisis?

Mayor Newsom, whose fifteen minutes of fame should have expired by now, excoriated the President. His Imperial Mayoralty stated: “I took the same oath of office that [President Bush] took to bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution,” he said. “The president has chosen to say, ‘I bear true faith and allegiance—subject to a change that I want to make.’” This is yet another rant from the Mayor Who Would Be King, and his logic would require that no president could ever support any amendment to the Constitution.

Some pro-family leaders had criticized the President for inaction on this issue until Tuesday, and the President’s announcement caught many off-guard. President Bush has put his administration and his political future on the line by assuming leadership in the battle to defend marriage. This will not be an easy fight, and the pro-homosexual forces have the advantages of media support and cultural momentum. Nevertheless, this is the battle call we are now summoned to answer, and President Bush has taken leadership as the general in this effort. The real question now is whether a massive army will join him in this effort. This is no time for cowardice.

