

WHAT THE AMENDMENT SAYS

When recognizing marriages entered into after the adoption of this amendment by the people, the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall define marriage only as the union of one man and one woman.

Why is this Amendment necessary?

Marriage defined as the union of a man and a woman is universal and predates all nations, religions and laws. Four justices in Massachusetts changed the legal definition in 2003 by allowing same-sex couples to get marriage licenses. The new amendment to our state constitution restores the true definition.

How marriage is defined determines the strength of the family. Every child deserves a mother and a father united for life. With or without children, the bond of husband and wife unites the sexes and teaches each to respect the other, an unparalleled value for all society.

Our laws should be free to promote this unique bond as society's foundation. Today, instead, religions are legally threatened if they refuse to recognize same-sex marriage in their policies, and schools must teach our children that same-sex marriage is a public good.

Doesn't the Travaglini-Lees Amendment define marriage traditionally?

- Yes, but it also confuses issues by endorsing civil union benefits for same-sex couples—equal to marriage.
- Giving benefits only to same-sex couples unfairly excludes other dependent relationships.
- The people deserve a clean vote just on marriage, without confusion.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

How many signatures must be collected?

The Massachusetts Constitution requires 65,825 certified signatures to be gathered. Since some signatures may be disqualified, we intend to collect 120,000 signatures to ensure that a sufficient number are certified. If successful, we can bring the new amendment before the state legislature in 2006.

How much time do we have to collect these signatures?

The Massachusetts Constitution allows signatures to be collected this fall from September 21 until November 23. These signatures must then be delivered to town and city clerks for initial certification. The signatures then go to the Secretary of State's office for final certification. The certification process must be finished by the end of 2005.



Who is allowed to sign the amendment petition?

Any person legally registered to vote in Massachusetts may sign a petition. However, only residents from one town may sign each petition sheet. Voters must be sure to sign only once, and only on a petition sheet labeled for the town in which they are registered.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who backs the new amendment?

VoteOnMarriage.org, a registered ballot committee of Massachusetts citizens has filed the new amendment. Original signers include former Vatican Ambassador Ray Flynn and Knights of Columbus leader Richard Guerriero. The Roman Catholic Bishops announced their support this spring, joining other religious and secular leaders.

What will happen to existing marriage licenses for same-sex couples?

Nothing. Four justices of the Supreme Judicial Court authorized marriage licenses for same-sex couples without the people's consent. Yet Article 1 of the U.S. Constitution disfavors retroactive measures. Any proposal attempting to dissolve existing licenses can be struck down by the federal courts. Thus, the new amendment does not mention existing licenses—it neither interferes with nor endorses them.

What about civil unions or other benefits?

The new amendment leaves the complex questions surrounding benefits for unmarried persons to the legislature. The goal of the new amendment is to protect the marriage institution, period.

How do we know this amendment will not be blocked like the 2002 amendment?

We are confident that the Senate President's actions in 2002, later ruled unlawful by the courts, will not be repeated. Current legislative leaders pledge to honor the constitutional process, we have the support of the Governor, and our grassroots network is strong.

A SHORT HISTORY

In 2001, concerned citizens of Massachusetts collected 130,000 signatures backing a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Yet then-Senate President Tom Birmingham closed the 2002 constitutional convention without allowing a vote to put the amendment on the statewide ballot.

In November of 2003, the Supreme Judicial Court, by a vote of 4-3, ruled in *Goodridge v. Dep't of Public Health* that same-sex couples can obtain marriage licenses, starting in May of 2004.

Rep. Phil Travis (D-Rehoboth) filed the Marriage Affirmation & Protection Amendment late in 2003. During the 2004 constitutional convention, the Legislature hijacked Rep. Travis's amendment, adding a requirement creating same-sex civil unions equal to marriage. This version, the Travaglini-Lees Amendment, was given initial approval by a vote of 105-92, with many legislators supporting it as a last ditch effort to delay the implementation of the SJC ruling.

Despite legal appeals, the Goodridge ruling was not delayed, and the state started issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples on May 17, 2004.

After extensive planning and careful research, VoteOnMarriage.org was created and a new amendment was announced in June, 2005. The new amendment is backed by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Massachusetts, Catholic Citizenship, the Knights of Columbus, and a broad array of other groups and citizens.

ACTION STEPS

Remember ...

- 65,825 signatures are required.
- Petition Drive runs Sept. 21 – Nov. 23.
- Amendment goes on ballot Nov. 2008.

For the individual

1. Pray for the effort.
2. Request a petition to collect signatures personally (see contact info below).
3. Organize a petition drive at your parish or civic organization.
4. Help financially.

For the pastor/parish

1. Pray for the effort.
2. Join the Catholic Bishops in supporting the petition and share Church teaching on marriage with your parishioners.
3. Identify members of your congregation willing to be petition coordinators.
4. Conduct a petition drive at your parish.



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Supported also by the
MA State Council of the Knights of Columbus

The New Marriage Amendment

An Introduction for Catholics

*What it says, what must be done,
and how you can help.*



*Massachusetts Catholic Conference
Catholic Citizenship
Sept.-Nov. 2005*