



June 12, 2007 - MA Catholic Bishop's Urge State Legislators To Vote on Marriage Amendment on June 14th

The Roman Catholic Bishops in Massachusetts have sent a joint letter today individually addressed to every member of the Massachusetts state legislature in advance of the June 14, 2007, Constitutional Convention. The Bishops urge the General Court to give final approval to the Marriage Amendment for the 2008 statewide ballot. The letter was signed by Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, Archdiocese of Boston, Bishop George W. Coleman, Diocese of Fall River, Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell, Diocese of Springfield, and Bishop Robert J. McManus, Diocese of Worcester. Questions should be addressed to the Massachusetts Catholic Conference at 617-367-6060 or by email at staff@macath-conf.org. The full text of the letter is as follows:

Dear [Name of Senator or Representative]:

A member of the Massachusetts General Court on record as opposing the Marriage Amendment told the press recently that "We owe it to the people of Massachusetts that they have the opportunity to vote, especially if they take the time to come to the polls." Likewise, the Boston Globe, also an opponent of the amendment, editorialized that "modern democracy shouldn't put barriers in the way of those who sincerely want to cast a ballot."

These comments addressed the issue of same-day voter registration. Yet they apply just as well to the upcoming Constitutional Convention scheduled for June 14. First on the agenda is the question of whether to send to the November 2008 ballot the proposed Marriage Amendment.

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops in Massachusetts, again urge you to vote on the Marriage Amendment without further delay, thus fulfilling your constitutional duty, and to vote "yes" to place the measure on the statewide ballot.

Marriage is a fundamental social institution. Its definition and meaning are critical concerns for all in society. Because it involves issues of utmost social importance, extending far beyond questions strictly legal, the marriage debate should not be reserved only to lawyers and lawmakers. Every citizen has a stake in the outcome because every citizen has a stake in the well-being of the family.

The people of Massachusetts have been asked to accept a new definition of marriage-without any input into the discussion. Society's determination of whether to accept the new definition will be short-circuited if the people's right to a voice in the matter is abrogated. True fairness involves letting the people vote on the Marriage Amendment to define exactly what constitutes marriage.

To argue that rights should not be voted on overlooks what happened in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* at the request of attorneys allied with those now making the argument. In effect seven unelected justices of the Supreme Judicial Court were asked to "vote on rights" by hearing a claim for same-sex marriage that implicated the rights of children.

Four of the seven justices voted to favor adult interests over children's rights. The one-vote majority redefined marriage as the joining of "two adults," thus ignoring that children do best when raised by mother and father united in marriage. By judicially redefining marriage in a way that is indifferent to the absence of mother or father, children's rights were voted on and taken away.

Certain issues transcend the courtroom, and the meaning of marriage in relation to the well-being of children is one of them. On June 14, at the Constitutional Convention, we respectfully request that you give the people the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right to vote. The people should determine for themselves whether adult interests truly outweigh children's rights as voted in *Goodridge*, or instead whether traditional marriage, uniting man and woman, best serves the common good because it puts the rights of children first.

Copyright © 2007 Archdiocese of Boston; all rights reserved