

Guide to the Issues:

Domestic Partners/Civil Unions

Issue Summary:

Domestic partner benefits are really another way of providing marriage benefits for homosexual partners and, in some instances, cohabiting men and women. At the heart of the issue lies the definition of marriage and family. It touches on the fundamental aspects of our social and cultural order. The implications go far beyond health care benefits. The issue represents a significant step in overhauling the mores of society. Marriage is a sacred institution rooted in the created order and nature. Ultimately, redefining marriage places the foundation of our society at risk.

Redefining the family beyond heterosexual marriage would lead to cultural confusion and societal anarchy. In essence, it would be a declaration that it is no longer the standard of society to include a mother and a father in the lives of children. By definition, homosexual couples exclude one or the other. The definition of family shifts from a one-man, one-woman relationship to a “relationship of love”—the rationale given by gay activists for why they should be allowed to marry. Ultimately others involved in alternative arrangements will claim that their relationships of “love” are worthy of social recognition, whether they are bigamous, polygamous, or even incestuous relationships.

Grounds for objecting to domestic partner arrangements must rest first and foremost on the declaration that legitimate marriage can exist only between one man and one woman. Society deems this relationship of such importance that it grants privileges and benefits to marriages and families that it does not afford other relationships.

The state government must not take it upon itself to overhaul the definition of marriage or to change the standard of family in society. To do so would lead to long-term destructive consequences.

Talking Points

- **It is reasonable to treat married couples differently than those in other relationships.** State law requires a married person to support his or her spouse, but it imposes no such requirement on unmarried partners. An unmarried partner can terminate a domestic partnership with no legal penalties, something a married person could not do legally. Therefore, it is reasonable for the state to recognize the additional legal duty of support imposed on state employees by covering spouses of married employees but not unmarried partners.

- **It is contrary to the state’s current policy.** The state legislature passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and state law limits marriage benefits to spouses and dependent children for local units of government.

- **Lack of equity for family members.** Current family members such as an elderly parent, grandchildren, ailing grandparent, or adult child are not eligible for benefits. If we truly want to help family members, these individuals should be helped first.

- **Benefits are costly.** Domestic partner benefits subsidize individuals who are at a higher risk for a

variety of health problems. Data from the Centers for Disease Control and the Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Statistics found that rates of domestic violence for homosexuals are 4 to 25 times the rates for married couples (Gay 2002). The incidence of AIDS is approximately 21 times higher among homosexual men than heterosexual men.

- **Morally wrong.** Domestic partner benefits force taxpayers to subsidize behaviors many would object to for moral and ethical reasons.

- **Fairness issue.** A state employee who cares for his disabled, ailing

grandmother cannot get coverage for her under his state employee insurance plan, but under domestic partners proposals, the state will cover the unmarried same-sex partner who is fully employed. This is fundamentally unfair to individuals who care for another person but don't have a sexual relationship with that person.

- **Accountability problem.** There is no requirement that the domestic partners even live together. What is to prevent a state employee from covering a friend or continuing to cover an ex-partner?
- **Same sex domestic partner benefits violate the state's Human Rights Act by discriminating against individuals based on sexual orientation.** Heterosexuals who

are not married but are cohabiting are excluded from coverage simply because they are not homosexuals.

- **Bad employee policy.** Strong marriages and families are essential for a productive employee and workforce. Domestic partnerships, whether homosexual or heterosexual, are inherently unstable relationships. A British medical journal reported that in the Netherlands, a country that officially recognizes homosexual relationships, male homosexual relationships last an average 1.5 years, and gay men have on average eight partners a year outside their "committed" relationship. Granting benefits does not make these relationships more stable but only gives incentives for more people to enter into such arrangements (Xiridou, 2003).

- **Domestic partner benefits will serve as a "homosexual recruitment program" since no other individuals will benefit from this proposal.** Proponents of domestic partners benefits argue it is necessary to attract good employees. This is disingenuous because it does nothing for the 99.5 percent plus of the potential workforce ineligible for these benefits. If the state wants to recruit the best employees, it should propose something for all potential employees.
- **Unwise financial expenditure.** Marriage benefits for homosexual partners represent an unnecessary expense that should be dropped given all the demands for revenues from other interests.

Recommendations

- **Pass a constitutional marriage amendment prohibiting the state from recognizing homosexual "marriages" and related civil unions and domestic partnerships. Marriage should be limited to one man and one woman, and marriage benefits should be afforded to only married couples.**
- **Prohibit Minnesota state government from granting domestic partner benefits to state employees.**
- **Prohibit any Minnesota unit of government from requiring private companies doing business with that governmental body to provide domestic partner benefits to the company's employees.**

Gay domestic violence finally measured. (2002). *Family Research Report. Journal of the Family Research Institute*, vol. 16 n. (8). Retrieved on December 19, 2003 from: http://www.familyresearchinst.org/FRR_01_12.html

Xiridou, Maria, et al., "The Contributions of Steady and Casual Partnerships to the Incidence of HIV Infection Among Homosexual Men in Amsterdam," *AIDS* 17 (2003): 1029-38. Can be found at the Official Journal of the International Aids Society Web site: <http://www.aidsonline.com/>

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