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ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION 5A

SLOWE SCHOOL DEMOUNTABLE

14TH & IRVING STREETS, NE • WASHINGTON, DC 20017

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From the desk of: **Robert (Bob) King**
Commissioner, SMD, 5A-12
Fort Lincoln
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August 12, 2009

Dear Commissioner:

As you know, there has been considerable dialogue and heated debate among District of Columbia citizens, particularly our constituents, on efforts to change the definition of marriage without the advice and consent of the voters. The D.C. Council's approval of legislation to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other jurisdictions without input from voters or a public hearing started a firestorm and stirred emotions on both sides of the issue. To the dismay of many residents the city leadership independently made a decision on an issue that is very important to many of our citizens. Therefore, it is felt that democratic principles have been virtually eliminated in the decision and policy making and the opinion and consent of voters and taxpayers were bypassed.

Whatever your position is on the issue, let us work together and provide leadership in an effort to give power back to the people. Let's talk about how we can give the voters a collective voice in the decision on whether to change the definition of marriage in any way and/or whether to affirm or challenge the leadership's position.

With the Council vote in May, there is the appearance that a body of 12 legislators, with the apparent support of the mayor and the D.C. delegate, took it upon themselves to independently and clandestinely make a decision on what is considered marriage in the District of Columbia by piggybacking the legislation on an unrelated bill. Many D.C. residents, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, and civic leaders feel they were denied due process and their voices were not heard for or against on this very important yet controversial issue. As Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, it is our duty to ensure that the voices of the people we represent are heard clearly and that an unbiased decision can be agreed upon, especially on an issue such as marriage that affect the very core of our society.

As an ANC Commissioner with over 20 years of dedicated service, I must say that the recent exclusive action taken by the council on same-sex marriage is certainly one of the most contentious issues I have witnessed. With the rights of nearly 600,000 District residents at stake, the voice of the people must be heard beyond that of the City Council, Mayor and D.C. Delegate to Congress. Regardless of one's position on the matter of same-sex marriage, it is vital that citizens have the necessary means to articulate their positions on issues as opposed to being left to comply by default at the will of elected officials. The will of the people is the best law.

Therefore, I ask that you stand with me and others as we move forward to support a citizen's initiative on same-sex marriage—the definition of marriage—to ensure that the will of the people is truly and accurately represented in the law of this great city. While a referendum may have been impermissible, a citizen's initiative still remains a possibility. Whatever your stance on the issue of same-sex marriage, you owe it to your constituents to join in a discussion on the next steps to insuring that their voices are heard and acted upon. We want to move forward with a legally binding citizens' initiative on the definition of marriage.

On Saturday, August 22, 2009 at 8:00 a.m. at "**Mt Zion Baptist Church**" (5101 14th St; Washington, D.C. 20011) let's meet to discuss how we are going to move a citizens' initiative forward. Refreshments will be served from 8:00am-8:30am *and the meeting will begin promptly at 8:30am*. If you have questions regarding the meeting, please feel free to contact a member of the planning team via telephone at (202) 427-2655 or via email at grassrootsdc@gmail.com. Please RSVP to confirm your attendance by **Thursday, August 21st**, so that we can accommodate you.

In the event that you cannot attend this meeting, please promptly return the signed resolution using the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope to: P.O. 41131, Washington, D.C. 20018. Thank you for supporting the effort to give a voice and power Back to the People I look forward to working with you to make a citizens' initiative on the definition of marriage a reality for the ballot in 2010.

Sincerely,

Robert "Bob" L. King, Sr.

Commissioner

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 5A-12

Enclosure:

Resolution In Support of a Citizens' Initiative on the Definition of Marriage in DC

Give the Power Back to the People
Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners
Resolution In Support of
A Citizens' Initiative on Definition of Marriage in the District of Columbia
For 2010 Election Ballot for Voice of the People

- I. Whereas, citizens of the District of Columbia have not had an opportunity to address or vet the issue of changing the definition of marriage to include same-sex marriage and most were not aware it was an issue before Council;
- II. Whereas, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, which provide great weight on D.C. issues, policies and laws have a constituency of at least 2000 residents, were not consulted on legislation regarding the definition of marriage, nor were civic groups, community leaders, the faith community, business leaders, or other groups;
- III. Whereas, the Council of the District of Columbia, the Mayor, and the D.C. Delegate to Congress support legislation passed to recognize same-sex marriage; however, there was no public hearing on changing the definition of marriage to gauge pros and cons or public/taxpayer opinion and Congress chose not to intervene on this local issue;
- IV. Whereas, the D.C. Council is expected to introduce legislation in Fall 2009 to change the definition of marriage to permit same-sex marriages to be performed in the District of Columbia while recent legislation allowed such marriages to be recognized from other jurisdictions;
- V. Whereas, the District of Columbia is the Nation's Capital, America's First City with nearly 600,000 residents (more residents than a few states) and is considered the international seat of democracy in the Free World and symbolically D.C. policies may have far reaching impact and set the tone and direction for jurisdictions to follow;
- VI. Whereas, nothing in the D.C. Human Rights Act should prevent the people of D.C. from being heard on this important public policy matter of changing the definition of marriage or other public policy issues;
- VII. Whereas, the District of Columbia and a multitude of states allow for ballot measures in the form of a referendum/initiative to create, affirm, or reject legislation;
- VIII. Whereas, the people of the District of Columbia should decide the critical issue of the definition of marriage and same-sex marriage, not the thirteen members of the D.C. Council, the Mayor, and the D.C. Delegate to Congress;

_____ **Initial here before signing final page**

Therefore be it resolved that the undersigned supports having a citizens' initiative (according to the procedures outlined by the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics and the laws of the District of Columbia) on the ballot in the 2010 General Election (or the appropriate election when the ballot measure process is completed) for D.C. voters to decide whether or not the definition of marriage in the District of Columbia shall include same-sex marriage.

Be it further resolved that District of Columbia registered voters (Democrats, Republicans, Independents, Statehood/Green Party) should be able to vote "for" or "against", "yea" or "nay" on the ballot measure, thus giving power back to the people in the Nation's Capital and taking the matter beyond elected officials to determine once and for all the will of the people.