

June 1, 2005

Mr. John Sweeney, President
American Federation of Labor & Congress
of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
815 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. Sweeney:

We write on behalf of tens of millions of American families – including, public opinion polls indicate, a strong majority of dues-paying union households – who believe that the institution of marriage is and should remain a union of one man and one woman.

A Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll in March 2005 reported that 68 percent of Americans “think marriages between homosexuals...should **not** be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriage.”

The same Gallup Poll found that by a 57 to 37 percent margin (and growing), Americans “favor...a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as being between a man and a woman, thus barring marriages between gay or lesbian couples.”

Similar polls at the state level indicate that support for protecting one-man, one-woman marriage among dues-paying union households – including by state constitutional amendment – is as strong or stronger than among the general population.

For example, in November, nearly 60 percent of voters in heavily-unionized Michigan approved a Marriage Protection Amendment to their state constitution. The *Detroit News* reported October 22nd that a public opinion survey it commissioned “show(ed) two-thirds of union households support (the Marriage Protection Amendment), identical to the level of support in nonunion households.”

Democratic pollster Pat Caddell commented after the election: "If you look at Michigan and Ohio, ...57 percent to 64 percent of the union members voted for (state Marriage Protection Amendments)."

Surely, support for state Marriage Protection Amendments among dues-paying union members is equally as strong, or stronger, in each of the strong “union states” where voters have approved state Marriage Protection Amendments with large majorities: Alaska (68 percent), Hawaii (69 percent), Kentucky (74 percent), Michigan (59 percent), Missouri (71 percent), Montana (67 percent), Nevada (67 percent), Ohio (63 percent), and Oregon (57 percent).

Undoubtedly, millions of dues-paying American union members either already have, or soon will, vote in favor of a Marriage Protection Amendment to their state constitutions. Just as certainly, millions of dues-paying union members also support ratification of a Marriage Protection Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, to ensure that five members of the U.S. Supreme Court are not allowed to overturn the existing state laws and voter-approved state constitutional amendments that define marriage as only between one man and one woman.

In light of strong and passionate support among American working men and women for protecting one-man, one-woman marriage, we were shocked to learn of the national AFL-CIO Executive Committee's unanimous approval in March of a resolution condemning all federal and state marriage amendments and seemingly endorsing not only so-called homosexual "marriage" but the entire political and social agenda of homosexual and "transgender" activists.

Specifically, on March 3rd in Las Vegas, the AFL-CIO Executive Committee unanimously endorsed a resolution titled, "Support for the Full Inclusion and Equal Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People in the Workplace." (copy enclosed)

Pride at Work – www.PrideatWork.org – the AFL-CIO's formally affiliated homosexual activist group with offices at your national headquarters in Washington, credits you and your leadership slate for the resolution, Mr. Sweeney, saying its approval "happened because of the strong leadership of President John Sweeney in bringing this resolution to the entire Executive Council and the hard work of Executive Vice-President Linda Chavez-Thompson."

Mr. Sweeney, your resolution stated:

"(T)hrough the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA), some members of the U.S. Congress want to amend the U.S. Constitution to deny important rights to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families, such as the right to hospital visitation, inheritance, and health care rights for partners. On November 2, 2004, eleven states passed similar marriage amendments to their state constitutions.

...The FMA and its state counterparts threaten the rights of working people by creating an environment across the nation that is hostile to the rights of domestic partners, regardless of their sexual orientation."

...The AFL-CIO reiterates its longstanding support for the full inclusion and equal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the workplace and in society."

In addition to grossly mischaracterizing and opposing constitutional protection for one-man, one-woman marriage, exactly *what* are AFL-CIO officials endorsing in that broad closing sentence – particularly its reference to "transgender people" -- and supposedly on behalf of dues-paying American union members?

On that question, openly homosexual Congressman Barney Frank, D-Mass., explained as follows why he *opposes* including so-called “transgender rights” language in the federal “gay rights” legislation he perennially sponsors:

“There are workplace situations -- communal showers, for example -- when the demands of the transgender community fly in the face of conventional norms and therefore would not pass in any Congress. I've talked with transgender activists and what they want -- and what we will be forced to defend -- is for people with penises who identify as women to be able to shower with other women. There are no votes for that. And if that is the price for this bill, it is wrong.”

Co-ed showers on the job, said Rep. Frank. Is *that* what AFL-CIO officials are spending American working men and women’s hard-earned dues money to promote in the workplace?

We firmly believe that the overwhelming majority of dues-paying union members who finance the national AFL-CIO and its organizational, political and lobbying activities strongly *oppose* so-called homosexual “marriage” as well as the broader political agenda of homosexual and “transgender” activists.

We’re further troubled by the expectation that you will use the dues and fees you collect as a condition of employment from employees who strongly *oppose* homosexual and transgender activists’ political agenda to pay for your political and lobbying activities in *support* of that agenda.

On behalf of the millions of dues-paying American union members who agree with us that marriage between one man and one woman deserves and demands state and federal constitutional protection, we urge the AFL-CIO Executive Committee to respect and honor the views of your own rank-and-file membership by voting – during your upcoming July 25-28 annual convention in Chicago -- to rescind your March 3rd resolution.

Between now and your July convention, we and the pro-family organizations we represent will:

- Do everything in our power to ensure that rank-and-file union members all across America are fully informed of the AFL-CIO’s endorsement of homosexual activists’ political agenda, particularly your formal opposition to state and federal constitutional protections for the institution of one-man, one-woman marriage.
- To the best of our ability and resources, inform and educate union members all across America regarding:
 - Their “**religious objector**” rights under federal law -- if they hold a sincere conviction that further financial support of an AFL-CIO-affiliated union would constitute a violation of their religious conscience -- to resign their union membership and divert the equivalent of their union dues or fees to a charitable organization instead.

- Their ***Beck vs. Communication Workers of America*** rights to resign and demand (a) a full accounting of the use of all union funds for political purposes and (b) a full refund of all union dues and fees used for any purpose *other than* collective bargaining, contract administration, and grievance processing.
- Their right in twenty-two **Right to Work** states to withdraw not only their membership, but the *full* amount of any and all payment of dues or fees to an AFL-CIO-affiliated union.
- **In anticipation that the AFL-CIO Executive Committee may refuse to rescind its opposition to constitutional protection of marriage, communicate our commitment to ensure that legal counsel and representation are provided at no charge to any union member who wishes – in response to your resolution – to exercise any or all of the above-stated legal rights to withhold funding from the AFL-CIO and its affiliate unions.**

Mr. Sweeney, as you approach your annual national convention, it appears to us that now is a time at which you and other national union officials should be particularly sensitive to the possibility of gravely offending millions of dues-paying union members who will likely be outraged to learn that their unions are promoting so-called homosexual “marriage” in society and “transgender” cross-dressing “rights” on the job.

We know that many of those who faithfully support our organizations and ministries are also loyal union members. On behalf of their families, specifically on behalf of their children and future generations of America’s children, we will not stand silently by while national AFL-CIO officials use the hard-earned dues money of America’s working men and women – against their will, and at odds with their own deeply-held religious and moral convictions -- to advance a political agenda that threatens to undermine the institutions of God-ordained marriage and the family.

We also stand ready to provide the AFL-CIO Executive Committee any information it may require to be persuaded that instead of opposing constitutional protection for one-man, one-woman marriage, the AFL-CIO should rescind its earlier resolution and instead *support* a Marriage Protection Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and to each state constitution as being in the best interests of American working people and their families.

We look forward to your reply or, better yet, the AFL-CIO’s vote during your annual convention next month in Chicago to rescind the March 3rd resolution.

Sincerely,

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Support for the Full Inclusion and Equal Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People in the Workplace

March 03, 2005
Las Vegas

The mission of the AFL-CIO is to improve the lives of working families—to bring economic justice to the workplace and social justice to our nation.

We believe that all union members are entitled to equal rights and that all of their families should have access to benefits they need and deserve. The AFL-CIO is dedicated to fighting for those rights at the bargaining table, in the voting booth, in city halls and statehouses, and on Capitol Hill.

The AFL-CIO recognizes that families come in all shapes and sizes. As our families change, our union contracts also change. For more than a generation, unions have negotiated domestic partner benefits for the workers they represent, which provide crucial access to health care, family and medical leave, and other benefits for our heterosexual families and seniors as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender families.

Now, through the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA), some members of the U.S. Congress want to amend the U.S. Constitution to deny important rights to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families, such as the right to hospital visitation, inheritance, and health care rights for partners. On November 2, 2004, eleven states passed similar marriage amendments to their state constitutions.

In its 214-year history, the U.S. Constitution has been amended only 18 times, to grant basic civil rights. For example, we added the Bill of Rights in 1791 to guarantee some of our most basic civil and criminal rights. We also abolished slavery and gave the vote to women and young people by amending the Constitution. But we have never amended the Constitution to discriminate against any group of people by denying them rights.

The FMA and its state counterparts threaten the rights of working people by creating an environment across the nation that is hostile to the rights of domestic partners, regardless of their sexual orientation. Unions will have an increasingly difficult time making gains in domestic partner benefits, and preserving those benefits that they have already won at the table.

The AFL-CIO reiterates its longstanding support for the full inclusion and equal rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in the workplace and in society.

From the web site of Pride at Work, the AFL-CIO's formally affiliated homosexual "constituency group" with offices at national union headquarters in Washington. (See <http://www.afl-cio.org/communitypartners/constituencies>)

Are You A Proud Union Queer?

Thinking about getting inked? Well before you take the plunge, maybe you should take a second and try one of Pride At Work's new temporary tattoos, just in time for Gay Pride! The message is simple, "PROUD UNION QUEER."



We're happy to send you out a stack of tattoos for you to use in your gay pride activities or other events. Just contact Sian at the national office and she will send you out a stack. 100 temporary tattoos are only ten dollars. Please email or call Sian at slewis@aflcio.org or 202-637-3988.

<http://www.PrideatWork.org/sp05/art7.htm>