



FREEDOM  
TO MARRY

## Faith and the Freedom to Marry

*Support for the freedom to marry has grown among people of all faiths during the past decade. Many people of faith understand we can make religious choices in our own lives yet still respect our fellow citizens' desire to go to City Hall to get married.*

- » Millions of Americans hold their faith to be paramount to an understanding of the world. Inspired by faith, gay and non-gay people alike make sacrifices daily, putting others before themselves in the name of their beliefs.
- » The Golden Rule guides many people of faith in their understanding and movement toward ending the exclusion of gay and lesbian couples from marriage. Treating others as we would want to be treated includes allowing loving and committed gay couples to marry.
- » The freedom of religion in America guarantees that religious institutions may decide whom to marry, as long as legal criteria and certain responsibilities are met. Religious communities, which already recognize and celebrate the loving commitment of same-sex couples include the United Church of Christ, Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association and Metropolitan Community Churches.
- » However, no church or clergy would be forced to marry any couple, including gay couples, just as they need not allow divorced people to remarry, or perform a wedding of an interfaith couple, if they choose not to.
- » Civil marriage is the responsibility of the government. Just as the government respects church-sanctioned marriages, and would not presume to tell churches who they may or may not marry, so too, faiths should be respectful of civil marriages.
- » Every year, at least 40 percent of heterosexual couples in the United States who get married do so without a church, synagogue, mosque or religious ceremony.
- » People come to their faith from a range of life experiences. In virtually every denomination, majorities of young people of faith, who are much more likely to know someone who is gay, are standing up for marriage — despite often coming from denominations with a history of opposing to the freedom to marry.



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## Polling

- » Sixty percent of Americans who say religion is “fairly important” in their lives favor the freedom to marry. [Gallup Research, May 2010]
- » A 2010 report from the Pew Research Center found a majority of Catholics (46 percent to 42) support the freedom to marry. Support has also ticked upward in all religious categories including black protestant, mainline Christians, and Evangelicals. [Pew Research Center, October 2010]
- » Fifty-eight percent of Californians believe it is appropriate to apply the Golden Rule to marriage for same-sex couples. Solid majorities of Latino Catholics and mainline Protestants said they would vote for the freedom to marry. [Public Religion Research Institute, July 2010]
- » The Rhode Island Marriage Coalition (RIMC) released a poll showing for the first time majority support for the freedom to marry among Rhode Island voters. The majority finding is also significant in its demographic diversity. The voter majority includes 57 percent of Catholics, 58 percent of independent voters, 56 percent of women over 50, and 64 percent of parents. [Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, July 2010]
- » Support for marriage for same-sex couples is significant among young religious Americans. According to a 2008 study by the group Faith in Public Life, among young white mainline Protestants and Catholics, close to half (48% and 44% respectively) support the freedom to marry. The same study found that young white evangelicals are more than twice as likely as older evangelicals to say that gay couples should be allowed to marry. [Faith in Public Life, October 2008]
- » Nearly four-in-ten young evangelicals say they have a close friend or family member who is gay or lesbian—a rate approximately the same as all young adults and more than double the rate of older evangelicals. [Faith in Public Life, October 2008]
- » Fifty-eight percent of white evangelical Christians under age 30 say they support legal recognition of same-sex couples through marriage or civil union. [PBS-Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly, September 2008]
- » The Higher Education Research Institute found sixty-six percent of Catholic freshmen and 58 percent of Muslim freshmen support the freedom to marry, as do between 50 and 75 percent of students affiliated with most Protestant Christian denominations. [Higher Education Research Institute, March 2010]