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June 2000

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Governor Overrules the People on Gay Benefits Issue

Dear Friends:

During the past few months, it has become apparent that the homosexual movement is gaining momentum. Recent polls suggest that the public, including professing Christians, are becoming more inclined to look the other way - rather than be viewed as "intolerant." Homosexuals, in cooperation with the media, continue to persuade the public that they are being discriminated against and in need of special protections and rights.

Yet people who practice homosexual behavior do not "evidence any obvious, immutable, or distinguishing characteristics - race, color, gender...which define other protected classes."¹ They are not being discriminated against "in any of the areas considered essential by the courts: economic status, educational opportunity or political representation."² Thousands of people have chosen to stop practicing homosexual behavior, evidence that homosexuality is a life-style choice, not biologically determined.

In our state, homosexual activists have encountered little resistance while advancing their radical agenda at city council meetings. Convinced that the Church is impotent, homosexual groups have persuaded several labor unions and a number of elected officials to join them in their cause. Together, they have successfully pressured Governor Gary Locke to call for sweeping changes in state government.

In a surprise announcement several weeks ago, Governor Locke directed the Public Employee Benefits Board (PEBB) to devise a plan for providing benefits to same-sex partners of public employees. The board met on May 23rd and voted to follow the Governor's recommendation. Although Governor Locke has no constitutional authority to implement such an arbitrary directive, he will likely get away with it if "good men do nothing."

We are determined to hold Governor Locke accountable for his actions - and so are more than forty legislators who have signed a letter to this effect. Redefining the family and creating a new civil relationship cannot be done by the stroke of the Governor's pen and the votes of a Governor appointed board. The power to originate laws is reserved for the legislature, to ensure that citizens have representation in the debate. State law already prohibits the recognition of same-sex unions. Governor Locke's proposal attempts to circumvent the law by creating a parallel marriage and calling it a "partnership."

It is not only the morality and legality of the Governor's edict that are disturbing, but the economic repercussions. Expanded benefits could increase the insurance fund shortfall another \$11.5 million this year alone. The 2000 legislature specified that NO state agency shall commit any funds not authorized in the current budget. That means state workers will be forced to pay for the increased health care premiums.

Prior to the PEBB hearing, we held a press conference to inform people how Governor Locke had taken away their voice on this issue. Two lawmakers immediately stepped up to speak out at this press conference, Senators Dan Swecker (R-Rochester) and

gubernatorial candidate Harold Hockstatter (R-Moses Lake). Providing additional firepower, attorneys Jordan Lorence and Jonathan Gundlach from the Alliance Defense Fund explained the legal implications of this issue.

Several representatives from statewide pro-family organizations also joined us. The support and cooperation of these key leaders, including Bob Higley, Washington Evangelicals for Responsible Government (WERG); Anne Ball, Concerned Women for America of Washington; Penny Lancaster, Coalition for Better Community Standards and Robert Taylor from Metanoia Ministries, was essential to the success of this press conference.*

As a result, we had the opportunity to do interviews with major media outlets throughout the Northwest. KVI 570 talk-show host Kirby Wilbur featured the issue during his morning drive-time show on May 24th. Also stepping up to lead were Sen. Val Stevens (R-Arlington), Sen. Joe Zarelli (R-Vancouver), Rep. Kathy Lambert (R-Redmond), Rep. John Pennington (R-Battleground) and Rep. Tom Mielke (R-Battleground) who issued press releases and are working to prepare legislation to overturn the unfortunate and unlawful executive order by the Governor. Democrat Senators Marilyn Rasmussen (Eatonville) and Tim Sheldon (Potlatch) have also stated their opposition to Governor Locke's end-run around the legislature and state law.

Now, we need your help to keep the pressure on Governor Locke and the elected officials who are supporting his actions. **Please call the Legislative Hot Line.** Leave a message for the Governor, your State Senator and both Representatives that you oppose same-sex benefits for government employees. Also let them know you will "remember in November." The Hot Line is **1-800-562-6000**. Then poll your legislators to find out where they stand on this issue and let us know.

One reporter asked if we had financial motives for protesting the Governor's actions. That was an ironic question, as we were very aware that getting involved in this issue could result in a loss of income. We have experienced a 25% drop in contributions for the month of May. Combating the homosexual agenda is not popular or pleasant. Many on our mailing list simply do not want to face these issues. If you feel this to be a worthy battle, please consider sending a financial gift, as you are able.

And pray for us. We are no match for the enemy without God's intervention.

Sincerely,

Rick Forcier
Executive Director

P.S. The Election 2000 Scorecards are now available! The Scorecard rates your congressmen and senators on issues critical to the family. If you would like to receive one, check the box on the blue response card.

**Several organizations supported our stand against domestic partner benefits for state employees, but were not present at the press conference: America's Conservative Coffee Company, American Family Association, Community Impact 2000, Equal Rights Not Special Rights Committee, Save the Children.*

¹ Focus on the Family Position Statement on Homosexual Rights

² Focus on the Family Position Statement on Homosexual Rights