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The Chicago Tribune editorial board today urges the Illinois House to approve redefinition of marriage legislation before the legislative session ends on Friday, claiming public support for same-sex marriage is “barreling ahead.”

We beg to differ.

If such support is “barreling ahead,” why hasn’t the House passed Senate Bill 10 by now, three-and-a-half months after Senate passage on Feb. 14? Because millions of Illinois residents oppose redefining an institution that underscores the foundation of our society, and have made that opposition known to their state representatives.

Lawmakers two years ago approved civil unions, granting participants the same legal benefits given to married couples in the state. The editorial states civil union partners are missing out on federal benefits, legal protections and tax advantages because they aren’t married. These benefits **are covered by federal law – not state law**. The proper venue to get these benefits is not through an Illinois marriage license, but through legislation in the U.S. Congress.

Senate Bill 10 will not force any church or clergy to solemnize any same-sex wedding, or rent their parish or fellowship halls for any type of same-sex wedding recognition. But the legislation offers no such protection to faith-based health care facilities, educational facilities and social service agencies.

If the proponents of Senate Bill 10 are as concerned about religious freedom as they say they are – titling the legislation the “Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act” – why have they not included stronger religious freedom protections, such as found in Rhode Island legislation? Lawmakers in that state used explicit language guaranteeing that no religious organization or institution be forced to provide their facilities or services for any type of marriage.

The editorial urges the House to add a chapter to history by passing Senate Bill 10. But with scant days left in the session, shouldn’t lawmakers be focused on the future, and making it secure for its residents by passing a budget that protects the poor and vulnerable and by paying down a backlog of unpaid bills that imperils services for those in need?

Those actions would make for a chapter worth reading.

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