Jan. 2, 2013

Dear Illinois lawmakers:

Marriage is the lifelong, faithful union of one man and one woman, and the natural basis of the family.

Marriage is an institution fundamental to the well-being of society because a stable, loving marriage is the ideal environment for raising children. Through marriage, children grow up knowing that they were created through an act of intimate love. Marriage is also beneficial for adults as the ideal structure for men and women to live interdependently, recognizing the equal dignity, beauty and value of one another while also relying on each other’s care and love. This is the natural order embracing the complementary physical, emotional and spiritual design of men and women.

As such, marriage in its true definition has long been respected and publicly supported in our society. As religious leaders in Illinois, we find the continued affirmation of marriage between a man and a woman essential. The ongoing attempts to alter the definition of marriage in civil law are full of serious danger, primarily by degrading the cultural understanding of marriage to an emotional bond between any two adults and by giving rise to a profound interference with the exercise of religious freedom for those persons and religious institutions whose faith and doctrine recognize the spiritual foundation of marriage as an authorized union between a man and a woman.

Some claim that as long as religious ministers are not forced to preside over same-sex “marriages” the principle of religious freedom, as secured in the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment is protected. However, the notion that the exercise of religious freedom is confined to the interior of churches, synagogues, temples or mosques or what one does on Holy Days is wrong and dangerous. The freedom of religion also extends to the ministries of religious organizations and to the individual conscience. Thus, the real peril: if marriage is redefined in civil law, individuals and religious organizations – regardless of deeply held beliefs – will be compelled to treat same-sex unions as the equivalent of marriage in their lives, ministries and operations. Compulsion of this nature is a violation of personal conscience and of religious liberty.

We implore all people of good will to protect marriage and religious freedom. The far-reaching consequences of redefining marriage in civil law extend throughout society and will directly impact religious freedom. Marriage and religious freedom are ideals integral to Illinois, and our elected leaders should do all they can to maintain these important principles.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Belleville

Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet

Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago

His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago

Reverend Dan P. Gilbert
President, Northern Illinois District
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Peoria
Most Reverend David J. Malloy  
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Rockford

Reverend Mark A. Miller  
President, Central Illinois District  
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

The Right Reverend Juan Alberto Morales, OSB  
Bishop of Quincy, Diocese of Quincy  
Anglican Church in North America

The Right Reverend Wesley L. Nolden II  
Assistant Bishop of Quincy, Diocese of Quincy  
Anglican Church in North America

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki  
Bishop of Roman Catholic Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

Reverend Timothy J. Scharr  
President, Southern Illinois District  
The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

Elder Jack Ward  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Pastors and members of the following churches also support this letter:

Generational Blessings  
Flossmoor, IL

Living Hope Missionary Baptist  
Chicago, IL

Philadelphia Missionary Baptist  
Chicago, IL

Bibleway Ministries  
Barrington, IL

Grace Temple Holiness Church  
Chicago, IL

The Father's House Zion Church of God  
Zion, IL

Total Christian Life Ministry  
Joliet, IL

Christian Life Church  
Mt. Prospect, IL

Empowerment Christian Center  
Chicago, IL

Darion Ministries  
Oak Park, IL

Sacred Mountain International Christian Center  
Chicago, IL

Word of Grace Church  
Chicago, IL

Evangelical Free Church of Sycamore  
Sycamore, IL

Living Waters Presbyterian Church  
Addison, IL

The Purchased Church of God  
Chicago, IL

Chicagoland Church of God  
Lincolnwood, IL

NuWine Ministries  
Westchester, IL

Grace & Truth Apostolic Church  
Evanston, IL

Deliverance Outreach Center  
Chicago, IL

Polish Evangelical Fellowship  
Chicago, IL

Montrose Baptist Church  
Chicago, IL

Grace for Life Bible Church  
Naperville, IL

Rock of Ages Baptist Church  
Maywood, IL

Empowerment Christian Center  
Chicago, IL
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