

## The President's Radio Address July 10, 2004

Good morning. The United States Senate this past week began an important discussion about the meaning of marriage. Senators are considering a constitutional amendment to protect the most fundamental institution of civilization and to prevent it from being fundamentally redefined.

This difficult debate was forced upon our country by a few activist judges and local officials, who have taken it on themselves to change the meaning of marriage. In Massachusetts, four judges on the State's highest court have ordered the issuance of marriage licenses to applicants of the same gender. In San Francisco, city officials issued thousands of marriage licenses to people of the same gender, contrary to the California Family Code. Lawsuits in several States including New Jersey, Florida, Nebraska, and Oregon are also attempting to overturn the traditional definition of marriage by court order.

In 1996, Congress overwhelmingly passed the Defense of Marriage Act, and President Clinton signed it into law. That legislation defines marriage, for purposes of Federal law, as a union between a man and a woman and declares that no State is required to accept another State's definition of marriage. Yet an activist court that strikes down traditional marriage would have little problem striking down the Defense of Marriage Act. Overreaching judges could declare that all marriages recognized in Massachusetts or San Francisco be recognized as marriages everywhere else.

When judges insist on imposing their arbitrary will on the people, the only alternative left to the people is an amendment to the Constitution—the only law a court cannot overturn. A constitutional amendment should never be undertaken lightly. Yet to defend marriage, our Nation has no other choice.

A great deal is at stake in this matter. The union of a man and woman in marriage is the most enduring and important human institution, and the law can teach respect or disrespect for that institution. If our laws teach that marriage is the sacred commitment of a man and a woman, the basis of an orderly society, and the defining promise of a life, that strengthens the institution of marriage. If courts create their own arbitrary definition of marriage as a mere legal contract and cut marriage off from its cultural, religious, and natural roots, then the meaning of marriage is lost and the institution is weakened.

The Massachusetts court, for example, has called marriage "an evolving paradigm." That sends a message to the next generation that marriage has no enduring meaning and that ages of moral teaching and human experience have nothing to teach us about this institution. For ages, in every culture, human beings have understood that traditional marriage is critical to the well-being of families. And because families pass along values and shape character, traditional marriage is also critical to the health of society. Our policies should aim to strengthen families, not undermine them. And changing the definition of traditional marriage will undermine the family structure.

On an issue of this great significance, opinions are strong and emotions run deep. All of us have a duty to conduct this discussion with civility and decency toward one another. All people deserve to have their voices heard. And that is exactly the purpose behind the constitutional amendment process. American democracy, not court orders, should decide the future of marriage in America.

The process has now begun in the Congress. I urge Members of the House and Senate to pass and send to the States for ratification an amendment that defines

marriage in the United States as a union of a man and woman as husband and wife.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on July 9 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July

10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 9 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## Remarks at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Oak Ridge, Tennessee July 12, 2004

Thank you for the warm welcome. I realize the Y-12 National Security Complex doesn't get a lot of visitors—[laughter]. Thanks for the special arrangements. I'm also glad to have the opportunity to thank each one of you for the vital work you do here. And please pass the word to your fellow employees, many of whom were waving, I want you to know, as we drove in, for which I'm thankful. The Nation counts on your great expertise and your professionalism in producing, protecting, and maintaining material that is critical to our security. America is safer because of your service at Oak Ridge. You need to know our Nation is grateful for that service.

I appreciate our Secretary of Energy, Spence Abraham. He traveled with me today. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for your service.

I want to thank Jeffrey Wadsworth, who's the Director of Oak Ridge National Laboratory. It's not the first time I have met Jeffrey. I appreciate Jon Kreykes. I want to thank all the people who helped make this visit a successful visit.

I want to thank Senator Lamar Alexander, the other Members of the United States Congress who are traveling with us today—strong supporters, by the way, of Oak Ridge.

I appreciate the mayor being here, David Bradshaw. Mr. Mayor, appreciate you taking time to come. I want to thank my fel-

low citizens for giving me a chance to come and visit.

I've just had a close look at some of the dangerous equipment secured in this place. Eight months ago, the centrifuge parts and processing equipment for uranium were 5,000 miles away in the nation of Libya. They were part of a secret nuclear weapons program. Today, Libya, America, and the world are better off because these components are safely in your care.

These materials are the sobering evidence of a great danger. Certain regimes, often with ties to terrorist groups, seek the ultimate weapons as a shortcut to influence. These materials voluntarily turned over by the Libyan Government are also encouraging evidence that nations can abandon these ambitions and choose a better way.

Libya is dismantling its weapons of mass destruction and long-range missile programs. This progress came about through quiet diplomacy between America, Britain, and the Libyan Government. This progress was set in motion, however, by policies declared in public to all the world. The United States, Great Britain, and many other nations are determined to expose the threats of terrorism and proliferation and to oppose those threats with all our power. We have sent this message in the strongest diplomatic terms, and we have acted where action was required.

Every potential adversary now knows that terrorism and proliferation carry serious