

Memorandum

From: Jan R. van Lohuizen

Date: 05/11/12

Re: Same Sex Marriage

Background: in view of this week's news on the same sex marriage issue, here is a summary of recent survey findings on same sex marriage:

1. Support for same sex marriage has been growing and in the last few years support has grown at an accelerated rate with no sign of slowing down. A review of public polling shows that up to 2009 support for gay marriage increased at a rate of 1% a year. Starting in 2010 the change in the level of support accelerated to 5% a year. The most recent public polling shows supporters of gay marriage outnumber opponents by a margin of roughly 10% (for instance: NBC / WSJ poll in February / March: support 49%, oppose 40%).
2. The increase in support is taking place among all partisan groups. While more Democrats support gay marriage than Republicans, support levels among Republicans are increasing over time. The same is true of age: younger people support same sex marriage more often than older people, but the trends show that all age groups are rethinking their position.
3. Polling conducted among Republicans show that majorities of Republicans and Republican leaning voters support extending basic legal protections to gays and lesbians. These include majority Republican support for:
 - a. Protecting gays and lesbians against being fired for reasons of sexual preference
 - b. Protections against bullying and harassment
 - c. Repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell.
 - d. Right to visit partners in hospitals
 - e. Protecting partners against loss of home in case of severe medical emergencies or death
 - f. Legal protection in some form for gay couples whether it be same sex marriage or domestic partnership (only 29% of Republicans oppose legal recognition in any form).

Recommendation: A statement reflecting recent developments on this issue along the following lines:

"People who believe in equality under the law as a fundamental principle, as I do, will agree that this principle extends to gay and lesbian couples; gay and lesbian couples should not face discrimination and their relationship should be protected under the law. People who disagree on the fundamental nature of marriage can agree, at the same time, that gays and lesbians should receive essential rights and protections such as hospital visitation, adoption rights, and health and death benefits.

Other thoughts / Q&A:

Follow up to questions about affirmative action: *“This is not about giving anyone extra protections or privileges, this is about making sure that everyone – regardless of sexual orientation – is provided the same protections against discrimination that you and I enjoy.”*

Why public attitudes might be changing: *“As more people have become aware of friends and family members who are gay, attitudes have begun to shift at an accelerated pace. This is not about a generational shift in attitudes, this is about people changing their thinking as they recognize their friends and family members who are gay or lesbian.”*

Conservative fundamentals: *“As people who promote personal responsibility, family values, commitment and stability, and emphasize freedom and limited government we have to recognize that freedom means freedom for everyone. This includes the freedom to decide how you live and to enter into relationships of your choosing, the freedom to live without excessive interference of the regulatory force of government.”*