

# ARE FOES OF GAY MARRIAGE BIGOTS?

The U.S. Senate will vote this week on the Marriage Protection Amendment, a bill which defines marriage as being between a man and a woman. Senator Edward M. Kennedy is quoted today as saying, "A vote for this amendment is a vote for bigotry pure and simple."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue disagrees:

"A vote for the Marriage Protection Amendment is a vote to maintain the traditional understanding of marriage as it has been accepted for thousands of years all over the world. To brand those who support this amendment as bigots is mud-slinging: it is analogous to those who would call foes of the amendment 'gay lovers.'

"In 1996, President Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act. It denies federal recognition to same-sex marriages and allows states the right to deny recognition of gay marriages that have been performed in other states. Only 14 senators voted against this bill, and Senator Kennedy was one of them. Thus, his proclaimed opposition to gay marriage is nothing but an empty gesture: he refuses to do anything that would protect the institution of marriage from legislative or judicial tinkering.

"In the last election, all 11 states that had same-sex marriage on the ballot voted against it, including states with a 'progressive' reputation like Oregon. Moreover, more than 80 percent of the states have passed Defense of Marriage Acts. Mr. Kennedy, who is Catholic, should know that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is in favor of a constitutional amendment. And Black ministers, like Bishop Harry Jackson of the High Impact Leadership Coalition, have

rallied in favor of the amendment. Even in New York City, surveys show the people don't want same-sex marriage. Are all these people bigots, Mr. Kennedy?

"Reasonable people may disagree whether a constitutional amendment is the right remedy, but only fanatics will call those who support it bigots."