

COLORADO'S FLAWED CIVIL UNIONS BILL



Colorado's Senate Judiciary Committee is holding a hearing today on a civil unions bill. Bill Donohue addresses its flaws:

In 2006, the people of Colorado said no to gay marriage. Last year, lawmakers took up the issue of civil unions for homosexuals, allowing religious adoption agencies an exemption. Today the Senate Judiciary Committee is taking up the issue again, although this time the religious exemption has been gutted. Hence, the resistance from Colorado bishops and the Colorado Catholic Conference. Their concerns are genuine.

Supporters of the bill argue that if civil unions are legalized, they will not affect the state law that limits marriage to one man and one woman. Perhaps not directly, but it will certainly undercut the special place reserved in law for marriage: the effect of the civil unions bill is to substantively demolish the distinctions between marriage and civil unions, even if the nomenclature is not identical.

Far and away the biggest problem for the Catholic community, and for the rights of other faith communities, is the matter of religious liberty. To demand that Catholic adoptive agencies place children in a household of two adults of the same sex is to eviscerate their Catholicity. There is no getting around it.

It is not without meaning that Senate Bill 11 explicitly says, "A priest, minister, rabbi or other official of a religious institution or denomination or an Indian nation or tribe is not required to certify a civil union in violation of his or her right to free exercise of religion." So if the sponsors of the bill recognize the religious liberty implications of forcing the clergy to give their blessings to homosexual unions, they should also recognize the religious liberty implications of forcing religious social service agencies to give their blessings to such arrangements. To offer one exemption but not the other is illogical and unconstitutional.

On Friday, Catholics will rally at noon on the steps of the State Capitol in Denver. We urge all area Catholics to attend.