

## Marriage Amendment (S. Res. 1) Talking Points for Unitarian Universalists

*Note: This Amendment is officially called the “Marriage Protection Act,” but we recommend never using the word “protection” because it gives the misperception that this amendment actually does something to protect marriage, rather than simply discriminating against deserving families.*

**First and foremost, make it clear that this amendment means that real people (“my family,” “my sister Wanda’s family,” “Bill and Bob in my congregation,” etc.) will be denied important rights.**

In fact, this amendment would not only refuse these families access to the more than 1,000 federal benefits of marriage—including health care coverage, hospital visitation rights, and family medical leave—but would likely result in many families losing benefits they now have when state and local laws are overturned to comply with the federally-mandated definition. Denying and removing these benefits will have only negative consequences, both for those directly affected and for the country.

Examples:

- A woman from church who couldn’t see her partner in the hospital, or discuss her condition with the doctors because she wasn’t “family”
- A neighbor who can’t be covered under his partner’s health insurance
- A friend who wasn’t allowed to take family medical leave to take care of their partner’s ailing parents
- A couple from your church who moved to a different state because of harsh laws against marriage equality.

**Second, emphasize that this amendment does not protect religious liberty, but in fact creates religious discrimination.** Religious marriage and civil marriage are different, and each religious group is free to define marriage in its own way. This right to religious freedom is protected by the Constitution and will not be affected by any state or federal court decisions on marriage. People of faith and goodwill can and do disagree about what constitutes marriage. However, this amendment would ensure that a single, religiously-biased definition of marriage would become the law of the land. In doing so, the Constitution would itself become an instrument of religious discrimination rather than a protection against it. Any federal definition of marriage should be based on public interest, not divisive political maneuvering that favors only one religious viewpoint. Again, the real issue here is which families have access to the economic and legal benefits of civil marriage.

**Third, this amendment would eviscerate one of America’s core Constitutional principles—the right to equal protection.** Amending the Constitution solely to discriminate against a particular group of Americans is unethical, unfair, and wrong—especially at a time when public opinion on marriage is changing rapidly. We should continue our proud national tradition of expanding rights through the Constitution—not creating categories of second-class citizenship.

**Finally, we believe in equality and love, not division and fear.** We know from our religious experience of worshipping and being together that what unites us as families and as people is much greater than what divides us. We do believe that families need more support in this country, but it cannot be accomplished by writing discrimination into our Constitution. We need policies that will help create as many stable, healthy families as possible—not impose definitions of what constitutes a family.

**Unitarian Universalists stand on the side of love.**