

TO PROTECT PRIVATE DECISIONS
ABOUT MARRIAGE

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 30, 2002

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a resolution "To Protect Private Decisions About Marriage." The decision to marry is one of the most personal and important decisions that many of us will make in our lifetime. When you ask someone to spend the rest of his or her life with you, it should be done out of love, admiration, devotion and respect. Choosing to get married is a truly monumental decision and is usually one of the most memorable moments of our lives.

Because the decision to marry is such a personal one, interference from outside parties is rarely warranted or appreciated. Many Americans turn to their friends, family or religious leaders when making a decision about marriage. Others turn only to their future partner. No one, however, turns to the government. And for good reason. Government interference in decisions about marriage is simply not warranted.

Unfortunately, President Bush does not agree. The Bush Administration has proposed to spend \$30 million dollars to promote marriage in this year's welfare reauthorization bill. This misguided policy intrudes on private decision between adults and takes needed funds away from programs that actually help raise poor people out of poverty.

This year, Congress must consider legislation to reauthorize the welfare program. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, passed in 1995, helped many citizens find work, but not necessarily work that pays a living wage. As we consider reauthorizing TANF, we have an opportunity to direct our welfare program toward the important goal of lifting the poor out of poverty. The Bush administration, however, would rather push poor people into marriage.

Stable, healthy marriages are very important for raising our children. The very institution of marriage is a cornerstone of our society and is a critical element in creating stable families.

Marriage is not for everyone, though. Some people simply cannot make marriages work, for personal, religious or other reasons. In more tragic cases, marriage is literally not safe because of an abusive spouse. Government involvement in marriage, therefore, is just not appropriate.

The American people agree. According to a recent Pew Research Center study, 79 percent of Americans believe the government should not develop programs to encourage people to marry or remain married. Furthermore, 66 percent of Americans who identify themselves as "strongly religious" believe the government should not interfere with decisions about marriage, according to the same poll. The American people clearly do not agree with the President's proposal.

In addition, government interference in promoting or coercing people to marry could have unintended, tragic consequences. According to a joint report by the Departments of Justice and Health and Human Services, 25 percent of women said they have been raped or physically assaulted by their current or former spouse. More alarming still, research shows

that 60 percent of women on welfare have suffered from domestic violence. As these statistics confirm, if government were to encourage or coerce someone on welfare to get married, it would not guarantee a healthier or safer family, and it could endanger the lives of mothers and children.

Not only is government involvement in promoting marriage a potentially dangerous endeavor and an unnecessary intrusion of privacy, it also takes money away from programs that really do create more stable and healthy families.

The problems facing poor people on welfare won't be solved by getting married. What families on welfare need is greater access to childcare, healthcare and job training. Evidence shows that an overwhelming obstacle for welfare parents looking for a job is the lack of quality, affordable childcare for their children. Providing better, stable childcare has proven working adults in employment. This applies to healthcare and job training as well. By providing better healthcare and more access to job training, we can equip poor families with the tools they need to provide for their families and have more stable lives. Why should we waste \$300 million coercing people to get married when that money could be better spent helping people out of poverty?

The Bush Administration's marriage promotion proposal is misguided, potentially harmful, and not supported by the American people. The resolution that I am introducing today says it is the sense of Congress that government resources not be used to influence, promote, or coerce individuals' private decisions about marriage. I hope my colleagues will join with me in supporting this important resolution and I call on the Bush Administration to reconsider this ill-advised proposal.

HONORING THE PONTIAC NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF NEGRO BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB AWARD RECIPIENTS

HON. DALE E. KILDEE

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 30, 2002

Mr. KILDEE. Mr. Speaker, I ask the House of Representatives to join me in congratulating the recipients of the annual awards presented by the Pontiac National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club. The awards will be presented at a luncheon on May 4th.

Over the past 37 years the Pontiac Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women will present the awards to individuals and organizations that have strived to improve the common good of all people. At the ceremony Lillie Nicholas will receive the Sojourner Truth Award, Hobert Maxey will receive the the Frederick Douglass Award, the Honorable Brenda Lawrence, Dr. Sharon L. Blackman, and Patricia L. Guthery will receive the Black Woman Achiever Award. Donald and Patricia Cordell and Alma M. Bradley-Petress will receive the Community Service Award. The Ombudswoman Award will be presented to Karen Barner.

Mr. Speaker, the Pontiac Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Pro-

fessional Women has given over \$36,000 in scholarships. This has enabled many African American students to pursue further education. I ask the House of Representatives to join me in commending the Club and their members for their contributions to the Pontiac area and their efforts to promote education.

BLOOMFIELD CITIZENS COUNCIL
AWARDS

HON. WILLIAM J. COYNE

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, April 30, 2002

Mr. COYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a number of Pittsburgh residents who will be honored on May 4th with Bloomfield Citizens Council Awards.

Every year, the Bloomfield Citizens Council gives out these awards to recognize members of the community who have improved the quality of life in the Bloomfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the 2002 award winners for their efforts to make Bloomfield a better place to live.

Robert Scullion, Jr. has been selected as the 2002 recipient of the Mary Cercone Outstanding Citizen Award. This award is given to individuals who demonstrate "an unselfish commitment to others and a deep love for the community of Bloomfield." Mr. Scullion, a lifelong Bloomfield resident, has demonstrated his commitment and love in a great number of ways, including his efforts on behalf of organizations like the Blind Outdoor Leisure Organization and the National Alliance for Autistic Research, his volunteer work for the St. Francis Hospital Ministry and the Prison Ministry for Western Penitentiary, and his participation in a number of Bloomfield sports leagues.

A Community Commitment Award will go to Mr. Joseph Covelli, who has served the community through his job as Principal of Elizabeth Seton Elementary School, as well as his work on such annual events as the Halloween parade and the Bloomfield Citizens Council Marathon Festival. Mr. Covelli also coaches a girls' softball team, and he has been very active in church affairs.

The Bloomfield Citizens will present four individuals with its Youth Dedication Award this year. Mrs. Lisa Thompson Gallagher will receive the Youth Dedication Award for coaching softball for the Bloomfield Girls Athletic Association for 15 years. Ms. Marlene Scholze will receive this award for volunteering as a softball coach for nearly 20 years. Mrs. Beverly Helwich was selected to receive a Youth Dedication award for her many years of coaching softball and basketball. She also has volunteered her time to the Immaculate Conception Athletic Association, which sponsors elementary school football. Mrs. Kim Schimmel Spears will receive a Youth Dedication Award for her many years of coaching basketball, softball, tee-ball, and Little League.

The Bloomfield Citizens Council will again present a number of awards for Christmas decorations this year. Mrs. Pat Donatelli Melfi and her sons will receive the Keeping Christ in Christmas Award for the nativity scene they created. Brian and Tresmarie Foulton Scanlon will receive the Most Outstanding and Completely Decorated Home Award this year. They