

marriage. This is one institution, even though imperfect, that has withstood the test of time and has proven to bring a sense of stability to society for time immemorial.

The institution of marriage is designed for children, not for adult love. Adults can love in many ways—between brother and sister, between grandparents, uncles, aunts, between friends and loved ones. But marriage is for children. I am so saddened that we have forgotten that. And I am even more saddened that marriage is drifting further and further from what it is supposed to be all about—children. Adults seem to care more and more about one thing, themselves. This is one of the reasons why 50% of marriages wind up in divorce. We must strengthen marriage—not weaken it. And I fear that, if we start to abolish marriage laws in our nation, we will go further down the path of teaching people that marriage does not matter for the well-being of children, it only matters for the pleasure of adults.

I am not here because I want to be here. There are many problems in my community, and I should be there working on them, not here far away in Washington, D.C. But I have flown all the way here from California, because I need to be here, to defend the most basic institution of society for the good of all, on behalf of my community. Because without marriage, we have no hope of solving the other problems we are facing back home.

I live every day in the front-lines of Urban America, where the ills of society are magnified greatly. People like myself, who provide a service to our community, are often the ones that have to “pick up the pieces” when marriages and families fall. In my 30 years of counseling, I have often dealt with grown children that still harbor hurts and deep seated frustrations because they did not have a mother and a father.

I know that there are good people trying to raise children without a mother and a father. Perhaps it is the single parent. Or the grandparent or aunt and uncle. Or the foster parent. They do their best, and we admire and respect them for that. But at the same time, we want the very best for children—and that is a mother and father, and an institution that encourages people to give children both a mother and father.

I want to say something about civil rights and discrimination. My people know something about discrimination. The institution of marriage was not created to discriminate against people. It was created to protect children and to give them the best home possible—a home with a mother and father.

Some people talk about interracial marriage. Laws forbidding interracial marriage are about racism. Laws protecting traditional marriage are about children.

To us in the Hispanic community, marriage is more than a sexual relationship. It is a nurturing, caring and loving relationship between a man and a woman that is to remain intact “until death do us part.” Children are born into this loving relationship with a great sense of anticipation. We love our children and we love children as you can tell by the numbers!

Marriage between a man and a woman is the standard. A child is like a twig that is planted in the soil of our society that requires two poles to have the best chance of growing strong and healthy. Those two poles, if you will, are the parents, Dad and Mom. Very different and at a times even opposites but necessary for a balanced form of living.

Furthermore, marriage is a moral and spiritual incubator for future generations. Our children learn from their parents not only how to make a living but more importantly, how to live their life. This is not readily learned by a simple form of transference of

knowledge but rather through the experience of daily living. Children learn from observation. As the home goes, so goes society.

I believe that we need to send a positive message to our children and their children. That we cared enough about the most basic institution of our society, marriage between a man and a woman, that we passed a Constitutional Amendment to preserve it for future generations. This is not, and must not be, about party politics. This must be seen as our struggle as a social family to bring stability to a divided house.

The President is right when he said that, “On a matter of such importance, the voice of the people must be heard . . . if we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a Constitutional Amendment to protect marriage in America.”

Thank you very much.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to begin this discussion with the members of the Committee on the Judiciary and others that are joining us asking for time. Before I recognize the ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I merely want to begin our discussion by observing how unnecessary consideration of this matter is at this point. No one in the Chamber is unaware of the fact that the obvious ploy by some is to play upon the worst fears of our citizens, who are deep into an election year, to deal extensively with a subject, a constitutional amendment, which every Member on this floor knows is going nowhere. The reason? Because it has already been defeated by the other body. The only conceivable point of this amendment is to energize the conservative political base.

Well, we are not buying into that, Mr. Speaker. We know that this is the reason that it is being done, because our distinguished majority leader only recently told us that we could not take up the assault weapons ban because we did not have the votes to pass it.

Well, do we have the votes to pass this amendment, a two-thirds requirement, while we are here on the floor less than 45 days before the election? I think that we know the answer to that.

We know that the States are fully capable of dealing with the issue of the same-sex relationship on their own. Our Nation has a long tradition of leaving questions relating to civil marriage to the States, and for more than 228 years the States have dealt with these issues, with marriage age limits, with miscegenation and divorce. Let us leave it with the States.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Pursuant to House Resolution 801, further proceedings on H.J. Res. 106 will be postponed.

DIRECTING CLERK TO MAKE CHANGE IN ENGROSSMENT OF H.R. 5183, SURFACE TRANSPORTATION EXTENSION ACT OF 2004, PART V

Mr. YOUNG of Alaska. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Clerk be directed to make the change in the engrossment of H.R. 5183 that I have placed at the desk.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will report the change.

The Clerk read as follows:

In subsection (1)(1) that is proposed to be added at the end of section 1101 of the Transportation Act of the 21st Century by section 2(d) of the bill (H.R. 5183), strike “\$21,311,774,667” and insert “\$22,685,936,000”.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the change is agreed to.

There was no objection.

#### MARRIAGE PROTECTION AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 801, proceedings will now resume on the joint resolution (H.J. Res. 106) proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relating to marriage.

The Clerk read the title of the joint resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. When proceedings were postponed earlier today, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) had 68 minutes remaining and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS) had 72 minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY).

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), the chairman of the Subcommittee on the Constitution of the Committee on the Judiciary.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time, and I want to thank the gentlewoman from Colorado (Mrs. MUSGRAVE) for having the courage to bring this forth.

Our Constitution is one of our country's most sacred documents. It is the fulfillment of the promises made in the Declaration of Independence, and it is the backbone of our system of government. It identifies our rights as citizens, the roles and responsibilities of each branch of government, and identifies the limits that prevent government overreaching. It also ensures that our system of government remains a democratic system, whereby the people, through their elected Representatives and officials, make laws. This means a form of government under which laws are passed by the duly elected Representatives of the people, not by judges.

Amending our Constitution is the most democratic process in our Federal system of government, requiring two-thirds of each House of Congress and three-quarters of the State legislatures in order to pass a constitutional amendment. But it has been done and should only be done when principles for governing and for existing in society need to be stated.