

## Commentary

### Gays have not weakened marriage

*Michael Costello The Lewiston Tribune*

No, my fellow conservatives, the world as we know it did not end Monday when Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire signed gay marriage into law. For that matter, her signature did not even do significant harm to the institution of marriage.

After this last week's assault on religious liberty by the Obama regime, small government conservatives should be particularly sensitive when government tramples upon issues of faith. And when government intrudes upon the religious institution of marriage, it does harm both to the church that yields government sovereignty over marriage and to marriage itself.

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Gays cannot possibly do more damage to marriage than heterosexuals have already done through its secularization. Since my youth the institution of marriage has been seriously devalued by the government heterosexuals licensed it to.

When marriage was primarily a religious convention, those who entered into a marriage swore their vows before God. When people started making their promises to the state, they gave themselves the authority to dilute the institution.

As such, every state in the union now has "no fault divorce." A no-fault divorce may be dissolved for no more reason that one of the partners wants out of it. The assets of the marriage are divided equitably and that's that.

Previously, the dissolution of a marriage required that one spouse prove in court that the other had violated vows, or engaged in some other reprehensible behavior that made continuation of the marriage impossible or intolerable.

We have no-fault divorce because heterosexuals, the only people who up until recently could get married, wanted it that way.

As a consequence of this diminution of marriage's value, we see things today that were inconceivable just a generation ago.

The current governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, a man who claims to be Catholic, is living with his girlfriend without benefit of marriage. Cuomo is considered a strong candidate for president someday, meaning that we could have a first lady who is not even married to the president.

The Catholic Church is supposed to be a bulwark of Christian cultural conservatism, but even the Catholics have allowed government to corrupt marriage.

On paper, the Catholic Church does not permit divorce. But when a rich influential Massachusetts Catholic by the name of Edward Kennedy wanted to divorce his wife Joan in 1982, the church accommodated him by granting him an annulment. Not so long ago, the Catholic Church would only

grant an annulment if convinced that the marriage had not been consummated. Considering that Kennedy claimed paternity for the three children Joan bore during their marriage, it seems unlikely that the marriage went unconsummated.

Joan Kennedy did not contest the annulment, arguing publicly that her husband had consummated a great many other women during their marriage and therefore his vows were not made in good faith and therefore she should not be bound by her vows.

This past week has seen conservatives who treasure liberty standing up to Barack Obama over his abortion diktat. It is somewhat inconsistent for these same lovers of religious liberty to recognize government sovereignty over what is in fact a religious pact. Whatever government calls it, government can only recognize civil unions. Civil unions are not only available to homosexuals, but also to atheists and agnostics.

All three of Washington's 9th District legislators announced their opposition to Washington's gay marriage law. Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum met with gay marriage opponents this last week to express his support for their efforts. All should reconsider their opposition for philosophical as well as practical political reasons.

It's inconsistent for libertarians and limited-government conservatives to demand that government intrude upon this institution by granting or denying access according to sexual orientation or anything else so intimately personal. To grant government the power to make decisions over something that is no one else's business is to concede to government the authority to intrude upon other aspects of our lives.

And although there is a significant conservative moral opposition to gay marriage in Washington and throughout the nation, there's a larger and rapidly growing libertarian groundswell that does not approve of a government that picks winners and losers.

Indeed, there is probably nothing that could restore true marriage more than eliminating government interference in defining marriage. Those who wish to see the sanctity of marriage restored should be looking not to the Statehouse, but to their own houses of worship.

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