

Remarks outside the Supreme Court of the United States

Re: *Obergefell v. Hodges* oral arguments on state one-man one-woman marriage definitions

By Peter Sprigg
Senior Fellow for Policy Studies
Family Research Council

April 28, 2015

Good morning. My name is Peter Sprigg, and I am a Senior Fellow for Policy Studies at the Family Research Council here in Washington.

One of the questions that will be discussed in the Supreme Court today is whether there is a “rational basis” for defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. To answer that, we must ask, “What is the public purpose of marriage? Why do we treat marriage as a public institution in the first place, rather than merely as a private relationship?”

Love and companionship are not enough to explain why we even tolerate, let alone desire, government involvement in this most intimate of personal relationships. You do not need a license from the government when you become best friends with someone, and you do not need a judgment from a court when you stop being roommates with someone. What is it that makes marriage *different* from other intimate, personal relationships?

The answer—the *only* answer that makes sense—is that marriage brings together men and women to reproduce the human race and keeps together a man and woman to raise the children created by their union. Those are important public purposes, and ones that can only be served by unions of one man and one woman.

Regardless of what individual couples may do or not do, defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman sends an important message to everyone: Society needs children, and children need a mom and a dad.

To redefine marriage would send the opposite message. Redefining marriage would send the message that there is nothing special about the relationship that creates future generations, and that children have no need for both a mother and a father. The consequences of those messages would, in the long run, be devastating.

Many people are making predictions about how this case will turn out. I will make only one prediction, but it’s one of which I am certain. After this Court rules—just as before—marriages between one man and one woman will continue to be uniquely important to the future and health of society. The only question is whether the Court will permit states to recognize that truth, or demand that they deny it.