

# Recognizing Statesmanship



## In the disheartening wake of the Respect for Marriage Act's passage through the U.S. Senate, Senator Barrasso stands firm in defense of religious liberty

By Nathan Winters, President of Wyoming Family Alliance



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In politics, not all decisions reach the same level of importance. Some decisions matter very much in the moment but will be forgotten within a decade. Others will be viewed by future generations as a turning point that causes generational harm.

Public Servants who understand the importance of such moments, and vote with future generations in mind, define the very word, "Statesman." Senator John Barrasso made such a decision this week when voting against a bill whose Orwellian title was meant to mislead and manipulate. In the so-called "*Respect for Marriage Act*" (or RMA), Senator Barrasso recognized a bill that could be used to drive people of faith, holding historic religious principles, out of the public square and out of business altogether.

A proponent of the bill argued that it doesn't "*embrace or validate ... devoutly held views, but simply tolerates them.*" The problem with this theory is that tolerance only works when it flows both ways, and the RMA only flows in one direction, demanding tolerance for one side, while simultaneously removing protections from the opposing side. Because true tolerance for religious freedom was missing from the bill, many with an eye toward history argued against it.

If the aim of the bill was tolerance, it should have at least included language from the Obergefell decision that first recognized same-sex marriage in 2015. This decision stated that belief in traditional marriage is held "*in good faith by reasonable and sincere people here and throughout the world.*" It further declared, "*Many who deem same-sex marriage to be wrong reach that conclusion on decent and honorable religious or philosophical premises, and neither they nor their beliefs are disparaged.*" Conversely, the RMA does not include any such assertions, and instead sets up lawyers and activists everywhere to sue anyone who still believes what almost everyone believed a decade ago.

I want to stand up and applaud the courageous and statesmanlike vote from our Senior Senator, John Barrasso, against a bill that will undoubtedly have harmful effects on religious liberty and will likely be revisited for generations to come. Sadly, Wyoming's Junior Senator did not follow suit.

My sincere hope is that Wyoming will learn and strengthen itself with a brand of intellectually muscular conservatism that understands the beautiful and hard-won history of religious toleration in America. Sincere conservatism sees the right to freely exercise one's faith as the wellspring of freedom itself.

It is all too rare to write a letter of thanks to the people we elect, and so **I urge you to join me in writing Senator Barrasso a simple note of gratitude for standing up for freedom.**

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