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Republicans, too, can support same-sex marriage

Pat Perriello | Oct. 23, 2012 NCR Today

David Lampo makes an excellent case for Republicans to support same-sex marriage in his recent editorial [1] in *The Baltimore Sun.* It is interesting how his arguments parallel the arguments of more left-leaning writers.

Central to Lampo's perspective is personal and religious freedom. He writes: "There is no clearer violation of the traditional Republican belief in equal rights before the law than when we relegate gays and lesbians to second class citizenship because of their sexual orientation." He sees Republican opposition to gay marriage as a repudiation of their long-held beliefs in limited government, and he focuses on their belief in freedom of choice about both economic and personal issues.

Lampo highlights what I believe is the most critical aspect of this issue, which is the distinction between the civil and religious parts of marriage. He notes that not all Christians or people of other faiths condemn homosexuality out of hand. Therefore, he said he believes the civil part of marriage, the marriage license, needs to be separated from any particular set of religious beliefs. Religious liberty demands that one particular interpretation of the Bible not be imposed on those who have a different point of view. Finally, he states that you can't demand religious freedom for one's own position but deny it to everyone else.

Lampo clearly places Question 6 on same sex-marriage on Maryland's ballot in the category of a civil rights issue. He makes clear that the new Maryland law preserves everyone's religious liberty, including those opposed to same-sex marriage. Explicit language ensures that no church need perform any marriage it does not wish to, nor does it need to recognize marriages that others perform. It does, however, give all citizens access to marriage, its benefits and its privileges.

If the Maryland law is upheld in the November election, it will be the first time any state has voted to legalize same-sex marriage. It will represent a major step forward in granting equal rights to all our citizens. It will also reflect the direction the country is moving on this issue, since the majority of younger voters support such legislation. It is not a liberal/conservative issue, but one that recognizes the dignity and personhood of all citizens.

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[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-gop-marriage-20121016,0,6258141.story