

MARRIAGE VOTE STATEMENT  
SENATOR GALE D. CANDARAS  
JUNE 14, 2007

There are many compelling arguments on both sides of the same gender marriage debate. There are important issues of civil rights, the role of the judiciary, and of course, my role as a legislator and voter in the state constitutional convention, which I have had to consider. This is the highest responsibility of public office: one that transcends the swirl of the issues of the day and one that has to be in the best interest of the Commonwealth for a long time to come. We engage in any process to change our constitution with only the greatest care, and sober reflection.

We have had an open and vigorous debate on this issue for several years now, and every possible argument on all sides has been made and has had a thorough hearing. No one can honestly say that they have not had the opportunity to be heard, and to participate in a wide ranging, public discussion. As difficult as it has sometimes been, I think we should be proud of how we have conducted ourselves to arrive at where we are today, and that we have done right by the generations that have come before in the hope of making a democratic and constitutional order work as well as humanly possible—just as we now seek to do right by those who will come after us.

For me, what all this comes down to is this: Same gendered couples are taxpaying, law-abiding citizens, who are important community contributors, well-loved and well-respected by their families, friends, neighbors and employers. They deserve and are entitled to the same legal protections enjoyed by all other citizens of our state. This is the law of the Commonwealth, articulated by our Supreme Judicial Court in *Goodrich v. The Department of Public Health*, decided in November, 2003.

Despite dire predictions, there has been no adverse societal impact from this decision and most people now express little concern about same gender marriage.

Springfield and Western Massachusetts needs these families, and all our families, to help rebuild our neighborhoods and the peaceful and productive society to which I know, whatever our differences on some things, we all aspire. As a practical matter, I believe we simply cannot afford to marginalize our human resources. Most importantly, I feel strongly that no child should ever be made to feel "less than" or "second-best" nor should any of our children be exposed to a public campaign focused on adult matters of personal privacy. There is altogether too much unseemly information brought into our homes and schools already. It is in the best interests of our children that we accept fully these new families.

I also want to address directly one of the more contentious issues in this debate: Same gender couples have been adopting children and building families here in the Commonwealth for about twenty years. In many instances, same gendered couples have adopted children with severe challenges, children no one else wanted, and they have worked miracles with them. These children would have lived lives of despair without

these families. This underscores how we cannot afford to marginalize any of our people; make anyone second-class citizens. We are all precious resources to each other, and to generations yet to come.

We have had a full and fair public discussion and debate, and today we must settle this matter so we can move on to other issues of equal and, perhaps, even greater import to our state. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said that the finality of judgments is the concession we make to the shortness of life.

I know from listening to my constituents, since I first became Senator this year that this vote, the vote I take today, is the right vote for the people I serve. I have been most impressed by the number of individuals who have called me and asked me to change my vote because they have changed their minds. One grandmother told me she had changed her mind and wanted me to change my vote in case one of her grandchildren grew up to be gay or lesbian. She did not want any of her grandchildren to be denied the right to marry the person they love. This is exactly the legacy we will leave to generations beyond us, and the example we can set for the nation and, I daresay the world, which is certainly paying attention to what we do and say here today.

A great deal of energy and passion has been focused on this issue by both sides. It is my most ardent wish that, with the settlement of this matter, and as we all leave here today, all the energy and passion we have held on this issue be redirected towards solving the crises of child abuse, child neglect, domestic violence, homelessness, hunger, criminalization of the mentally ill and so many more social problems that require our urgent and thoughtful attention.

I believe that we can do this. And that the tremendous knowledge, political and social skills we have developed in the course of this remarkable debate, can transform our political life together in ways that will help us be far better off as a state and as a nation than if we had never had this debate, and all that we have done to bring us here today.