



Ads focus on conservatives against FMA

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Monday, January 12, 2004 / 05:44 PM

SUMMARY: A new ad campaign promoting conservative opposition to the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) was launched on Monday by the Human Rights Campaign and Citizen Outreach.

A new ad campaign promoting conservative opposition to the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) was launched on Monday by the Human Rights Campaign and Citizen Outreach, a conservative public policy organization.

Full-page print ads bearing the headline, "Be conservative with the Constitution. Don't amend it," are appearing in major newspapers in 12 cities this week. Radio ads will also run on conservative talk shows hosted by Rush Limbaugh and Dr. Laura Schlessinger.

The Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA), proposed by conservative Republicans and embraced by right-wing, anti-gay organizations, would ban any legal recognition of same-sex relationships, including marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships.

The ad campaign capitalizes on the increasing rift among conservatives about the amendment. In recent months, prominent conservative commentators have voiced strong opposition to the amendment in essays in the New York Times, the Washington Post and other media outlets. Several of those commentators are featured in the ads.

The radio ad says: "Conservative columnist George Will calls the Federal Marriage Amendment 'a misuse of fundamental law.' And conservative former Congressman Bob Barr -- the man who wrote the Defense of Marriage Act -- calls a constitutional amendment 'needlessly intrusive and punitive.'"

"It's time to show Americans -- be they Democrats, Republicans or independents -- that a significant number of leading conservatives strongly oppose this amendment," said Human Rights Campaign (HRC) director Cheryl Jacques, in a prepared statement.

The campaign targets 12 cities in states with moderate to conservative Republican and Democratic senators and representatives, who HRC believes could be swayed by this conservative message. Those cities include Indianapolis; Las Vegas; Little Rock, Ark.; Miami; Milwaukee; Minneapolis; Omaha, Neb.; Philadelphia; Phoenix; Pittsburgh; Salt Lake City; and Tampa, Fla.

This is the first time the Human Rights Campaign has partnered with a conservative organization on a gay issue, said HRC national field director Seth Kilbourn.

"On this particular issue there is room for joint work," Kilbourn told the Gay.com/PlanetOut.com Network. "We want to make sure conservative audiences know there are a number of conservative individuals and organizations who are opposed to this constitutional amendment," he said.

The ads are intended to generate a grassroots "call to action," motivating conservative voters to call their

representatives and voice their opposition to the amendment, said Kilbourn.

"For a lot of the folks pushing this amendment, it's a fund-raising tool," said Chuck Muth, president of Citizens Outreach. "I understand what they're doing, I just wish they'd be more honest about it. It's terrible for social conservatives to be saying 'We've got to make this marriage issue or top priority,' when there are so many more important issues for the government to be focusing on."

The conservative emphasis on gay marriage seems to be increasing. On Friday, Vice President Dick Cheney told reporters he would now back the FMA if President Bush supported it. But during the 2000 vice-presidential debates, Cheney said he didn't think a federal marriage policy was appropriate.

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