

The Hon. Joe Manchin, III
Office of the Governor, State Capitol
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East
Charleston, WV 25305

October 16, 2008

RE: An Open Letter to Gov. Manchin from the Pastors of West Virginia

Gov. Manchin:

We, the undersigned pastors of churches in the State of West Virginia, stand united in support of the institution of marriage.

As you set the agenda for the remaining special sessions of the 2008 West Virginia Legislature, we ask that you include legislation that would allow the citizens of West Virginia to define marriage as between one man and one woman within the Constitution of the State of West Virginia.

The time to defend marriage in West Virginia is now. Our common belief is that marriage is between one man and one woman, is the foundation for a society that can be home to all human beings, the reflection of our relationship with God, and a cornerstone of our society. This compels our humble request.

Courts, legislatures, and even governors from around the country have placed marriages in West Virginia in immediate jeopardy. We believe that an amendment to the state constitution is necessary in order to prevent the redefinition of marriage by judicial pen, legislative whimsy, or executive inaction.

Our names below reflect our affirmation of the following:

First, God created marriage for the good of His creation (Matthew 19:4-7). Scriptural Truth, followed by centuries of tradition, reminds us that the union of one man and one woman is much more than a contract (Genesis 1). It is a sacred, lifelong union that creates an intimate community of life and love that, in turn, supports all of society.

Second, same-sex unions are not the same as opposite-sex unions. To believe otherwise is to ignore the uniqueness of each gender's design and undermines marriage (Genesis 2:18). The break down or weakening of the institution of marriage has devastating moral, spiritual, economic, and social effects on the whole of society. Marriage protects children by giving them an opportunity to grow up in the ideal environment: with a married mom and dad. Knowingly depriving children of that opportunity exposes our children to a great social experiment that is in no one's best interest.

Third, marriage mirrors God's relationship with us, thus completing, enriching, and perpetuating humanity (Ephesians 5). Any other pairing disrupts that relationship and is not marriage. As

ministers of the Gospel, we are compelled to defend the institution of marriage as created by God – in church and in culture.

Fourth, as children of God, equally possessing the human dignity of being created in his image, our stand for marriage in no way disparages others – even if they disagree with us. As recipients of God’s grace, we are committed to demonstrating the love of Christ to those living the homosexual lifestyle.

Fifth, we commit to pray and humbly work toward a just resolution of this issue, which is of grave importance to the well-being of the human family.

Sixth, as Christians, we cannot ignore our duty to speak the Truth to culture (Matthew 5:13-16). As citizens of West Virginia, we avail ourselves of the opportunity to affirm the historic, legal, and reasonable definition of marriage by making this request.

Seventh, we will strongly encourage Christians throughout West Virginia to engage in the civic process in defense of marriage and in support of the government’s leadership in defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman (Romans 13).

Eighth, we commit to earnestly and regularly pray for our governor, our state senators and delegates, judges, and all of the leaders set in positions of human authority over us (I Timothy 2:1-2). We pray for God’s wisdom to be imparted to each of them as they work to strengthen marriages in this state.

Finally, we believe the union of one man and one woman, in the institution of marriage, is foundational to our society and cannot be compared with any other union.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Seth N. Polk,
Cross Lanes Baptist Church,
Cross Lanes, WV

Terry Harper, Executive Director
WV Convention of Southern Baptists
Teays Valley, WV

Rev. Keith Wiebe, Sr.
Grace Gospel Church,
Huntington, WV

Pastor James R. Wright, Jr.
Maranatha Fellowship,
St. Albans, WV

Rev. Darrin Wright,
First Baptist Church of Wheeling,
Wheeling, WV

Rev. David Lemming,
Lewis Memorial Baptist Church,
Huntington, WV

Nathan Cherry,
Associate of Ministry,
Central Chapel,
Hedgesville, WV

Rev. Richard Mahan
St. Timothy's Lutheran,
Charleston, WV

Rev. Keith Cobb
Perrow Presbyterian Church
Cross Lanes, WV

Rev. Greg Varndale
Fairlawn Baptist Church,
Parkersburg, WV

Rev. C.J. Adkins
Westmoreland Baptist Church
Huntington, WV

Rev. Kevin Prevett
First Baptist Church of Fairlea
Lewisburg, WV

Rev. Todd Hill
Grace Baptist Church,
Parkersburg, WV

Rev. H. Kenneth Stidham, Jr.
Good Shepherd Baptist Church,
Scott Depot, WV

Rev. Bernard Toppings
Witcher Baptist Church,
Belle, WV

Rev. Dan Jividen
Immanuel Baptist Church,
Princeton, WV

Rev. Dave Buckley
Cross Lanes Bible Church,
Cross Lanes, WV

Rev. Kevin Dennis, District Superintendent
West Virginia North District,
Church of the Nazarene,
Fairmont, WV

Rev. Mark Johnson
Independent Bible Church,
Martinsburg, WV

Rev. Van Marsceau
Fellowship Bible Church
Charles Town, WV

Rev. David Goodin
Chaplain, Mepco, Inc.,
Morgantown, WV

Pastor Jonathan Rinker
Crow Christian Church,
Beaver, WV

Dr. Daniel Anderson, President
Appalachian Bible College,
Mt. Hope, WV

Rev. James Morton, Jr.
Freedom Baptist Church
Charleston, WV

Rev. Donald E. Knotts
Wayside Baptist Church,
Buckhannon, WV

Rev. Eddie Henson
Highlawn Baptist Church, Chinese Mission,
Huntington, WV

Rev. Tommy Knotts
Brenton Baptist Church,
Brenton, WV

Rev. Daniel Gunnoe
East End Baptist Church,
Bluefield, WV

Rev. Bill Hines
Parkersburg Broadway Church of
the Nazarene,
Parkersburg, WV

Rev. Chad Harvey
Little Sandy Church of the
Nazarene,
Bruceton Mills, WV

Rev. Dave Turner
Terra Alta Church of the Nazarene,
Terra Alta, WV

Rev. Scott Mapes
Ravenswood Church of the
Nazarene,
Ravenswood, WV

Rev. Matthew Bates
Colliers Church of the Nazarene,
Colliers, WV

Rev. Everett Clay
Newell First Church of the
Nazarene,
Newell, WV

Rev. Robert Kniley
Blennerhassett Church of the
Nazarene,
Parkersburg, WV

Rev. Dennis Yingling
Wellsburg Church of the Nazarene,
Wellsburg, WV

Rev. Jerry Dooley
Mannington Church of the
Nazarene,
Mannington, WV

Rev. Keith Miller
Canaan Baptist Church,
Mill Creek, WV

Pastor Jesse Wisnewski,
Perrow Presbyterian Church,
Cross Lanes, WV

Rev. Dana Snodgrass
Weirton First Church of the Nazarene,
Weirton, WV

Rev. Danny Linger
Parsons Church of the Nazarene,
Parsons, WV

Rev. Tom Fletcher
Spencer Church of the Nazarene,
Spencer, WV

Rev. Tim Bess
Shinnston Church of the Nazarene,
Shinnston, WV

Rev. Brett Phipps
Summersville Nazarene Camp,
Summersville, WV

Rev. David Edwards
Paden City Church of the Nazarene,
Paden City, WV

Rev. Steve Cummings
Chester Church of the Nazarene,
Chester, WV

Pastor Dean Brdlik
Emmanuel Community Church,
Lewisburg, WV

Pastor David Johns
Winfield Baptist Church
Winfield, WV

Rev. Darrell L. Clark
Southern Baptist Church,
Wayne, WV

Rev. Vernon Beachum
First Baptist Church,
Fort Ashby, WV

Pastor Mike Hager
Faith Missionary Baptist Church
St. Albans, WV

Greg Wrigley
WV Conv. of Southern Baptists,
Scott Depot, WV

Rev. David Spence
Cornerstone Community Church
Reedsville, WV

Rev. Ron Branch
Faith Baptist,
Mason, WV

Rev. Brian Harmon
Nehemiah Baptist,
Cool Ridge, WV

Rev. Jack Maxwell
Perrow Presbyterian Church,
Cross Lanes, WV

UPDATE: 10/17/08

Rev. Doug Miller
Morgantown Christian
and Missionary Alliance Church
Morgantown, WV

Rev. Ron McCoy
Cameron Baptist Church,
Cameron, WV

Rev. David Dockery
First Baptist Church,
Princeton, WV

Rev. Paul Harris
Abundant Hope Baptist Church,
Mill Creek, WV

Rev. Danny E. Evans
Farmdale Church of Christ,
Barboursville, WV

Dr. Donald Johnson
Life Builders Fellowship,
Bridgeport, WV

Rev. Stan Smith
Riverwood Baptist Church,
St. Albans, WV

Rev. James Messenger
Faith Baptist Church,
West Union, WV

Rev. Richard L. Chambers
Belington Church of the Nazarene,
Belington, WV

Rev. Delbert L. Hawley
Rock Branch Independent Church,
Nitro, WV

UPDATE – 10/21/08

Pastor Tim Campbell
Bethany Baptist Church,
St. Albans, WV

Pastor Matt Jacob
Bethany Baptist Church,
St. Albans, WV

Pastor Rodney Smith
Bethany Baptist Church,
Charleston, WV

UPDATE – 10/23/08

Don E. Ertel
Association Missionary,
Potomac Highland Baptist Assoc.

UPDATE – 10/24/08

Wayne E. Wicker,
Administrative Bishop,
West Virginia Church of God,
Beckley, WV

UPDATE – 10/27/08

Pastor Richard E. Gibson
Man Church of God,
Man, WV

Bishop James Bostic
Sophia Church of God,
Sophia, WV

Bishop Randell L. Fuson
19th Street Church of God,
Beckley, WV

UPDATE – 10/28/08

Rev. D. Travis Rucker
Rock Branch Independent Church,
Nitro, WV

UPDATE – 11/4/08

Pastor Michael Amico
Ohio Valley Christian Center,
Wheeling, WV

UPDATE – 11/10/08

Rev. William A. Davis, Sr.
Tunnelton, WV

Rev. Dave Greear
East Lynne Baptist Church,
Wayne, WV

Rev. Anthony Sluzas
Fresh Harvest Church (A/G),
Morgantown, WV

Pastor Shaun M. Roberts
Maple Grove Assembly of God
Eglon, WV

Rev. Mike House
Ambassador Baptist Church,
Elkins, WV

Pastor John Hood
Fresh Harvest Church,
Morgantown, WV

Cheryl Boggs,
LifeSong Ministries,
Moundsville, WV

Pastor Ron Hendershot
Pleasant View Baptist Church,
Parkersburg, WV

Pastor Bernard Vandergrift
Zoar Baptist Church,
St. Marys, WV

Rev. Kenneth Lake
Rawlesburg Southern Baptist Church,
Rawlesburg, WV

Rev. Tom Holstein,
Chelyan First Baptist Church,
Chelyan, WV

Rev. Jim Drake
Brushfork Baptist Church,
Bluefield, WV

Frank Pilcher, ADOM
Tri-County Baptist Association,
Martinsburg, WV

Rev. Ted A. Boggs
LifeSong Ministries,
Moundsville, WV

UPDATE – 11/12/08

Dr. Ray E. Hurt
Princeton Church of God,
Princeton, WV

Rev. Kim Parker
Lay Minister,
Weirton, WV

Rev. Dave Parker
Lay Minister,
Weirton, WV

Dr. Mervin Smith,
District Superintendent,
West Virginia South District,
Church of the Nazarene,
South Charleston, WV

Rev. Terrence H. Williams
Greater Things Fellowship
Southern Baptist Church,
South Charleston, WV

UPDATE – 11/14/08

Rev. Jon Lands
Fellowship Baptist Church,
Vienna, WV

Pastor Steve Nestor
St. Albans Church of the Nazarene,
St. Albans, WV

Pastor Bonnie Hissom
Hissom Tabernacle,
Church of the Nazarene,
Charleston, WV

UPDATE – 11/17/08

Rev. Charles Taylor
Summersville, Church of the Nazarene,
Canvas, WV

Pastor Jim Yoak
Faith Baptist Church,
Vienna, WV

Pastor Charles V. Williams
Teays Valley Church of the Nazarene,
Scott Depot, WV

Dr. John Anderson
Davis Creek Church of the Nazarene,
South Charleston, WV

Rev. Patrick McGue
Lens Creek Church of the Nazarene,
Hernshaw, WV

UPDATE – 11/19/08

Rev. Larry Arbogast
New Beginnings Church of the Nazarene,
Pinch, WV

UPDATE – 11/20/08

Rev. Greg Hudson
Dunbar Church of the Nazarene,
Dunbar, WV

Rev. Mark Green
Belle Church of the Nazarene,
Belle, WV

Rev. Randy Lanham
Charleston First Church of the
Nazarene,
Charleston, WV

UPDATE – 11/22/08

Rev. Gary Henry
Man Church of the Nazarene,
Man, WV

UPDATE – 11/24/08

Rev. Larry Westfall
Dunbar First Church of God,
Dunbar, WV

UPDATE – 11/26/08

Rev. Joe Ward
Tri-City Baptist Church,
Parkersburg, WV

UPDATE – 12/1/08

Pastor Michael D. King
Mt. Tabor Baptist Church,
Beckley, WV

Pastor John Frattarola
Cornerstone Bible Church,
Martinsburg, WV

Pastor Nathaniel Q. Wright
Lily of the Valley Evangel Church,
Martinsburg, WV

UPDATE – 12/2/08

Pastor Dave Marion
Independent Bible Church,
Martinsburg, WV

Pastor Randy Bradley
Independent Bible Church,
Martinsburg, WV

Rev. Frank Goff
Glasgow Church of the Nazarene,
Glasgow, WV

UPDATE – 12/5/08

Dr. Jerald W. Fisher
Executive Director of the
West Virginia Christian Education Assoc.,
Sissonville, WV

UPDATE – 12/8/08

Pastor Randy Ledsoe
Charleston Elk River
Church of the Nazarene,
Charleston, WV

Pastor Robert Clegg,
Parkersburg, WV

Rev. Melvin Boggs
New Bethel Church,
Elizabeth, WV