

“A Tale of Two States”

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” wrote Charles Dickens on the opening page of his classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. A similar phrase just might be fitting political commentary following two remarkable happenings last week in two sister states in our great union.

First, look at events here in the Show-Me State. A week ago last Tuesday Missouri voters went to the polls for the August primary election. Although there were a variety of interesting races perhaps no issue on the ballot was as interesting as Amendment 2 that proposed to add to the Missouri Constitution a definition of marriage as being the union of a man and a woman. The legislature placed this amendment on the ballot in an attempt to keep activist Missouri judges from striking down a state defense of marriage law already on the books on the grounds that it violated the state constitution.

Next, consider the events of Wednesday, August 4 in our sister state of Washington. Here, one day after a supermajority of 71% of Missouri voters passed Amendment 2 and codified in our state’s constitution that marriage is between a man and a woman, a single activist judge declared just the opposite to be true in Washington.

In my view, the decision made by voters in Missouri represents the “best” in the tradition of self-governance. Although I am personally pleased that Missouri voters spoke so resoundingly in favor of protecting the traditional definition of marriage that has been held sacred for hundreds of years, equally important is the fact that Missourian voters were allowed to speak at all. Regardless of your views on the subject of same-sex marriage, it is clear that the people have spoken after having a chance to examine the issue for themselves.

It is also interesting to note that a majority or near majority of the people who voted in the Democrat primary voted in favor of traditional marriage. Hopefully, this will serve as a strong message to John Kerry and Claire McCaskill that their support of gay marriage is out of step with the majority of the people in their party.

Compare this vote in Missouri with events last week in Washington and you’ll see why the decree of a single judge represents the “worst” example of a government official usurping the right and ability of a free people to govern themselves. Like Missouri, Washington has a state law that defines marriage between a man and a woman. Bear in mind that around 2 million law-abiding Washington citizens had gone to the polls and elected a legislature to represent them. That legislature had in turn passed a law protecting traditional marriage. However, a mere state law enacted by the people’s duly elected representatives was no obstacle for one activist judge bent on imposing his own political views on the citizens of Washington.

In my column the week before Missouri’s August 3rd election I remarked, “If the people of Missouri do not enact into the constitution a clear definition of marriage, a court may simply create their own.” Little did I realize with what astonishing speed this prediction

would come true. Fortunately, it did not come true here and Missouri voters have now moved to block the ability of state court judges to rewrite our laws from the bench when they amended our state's constitution. It is unfortunate that such measures have to be taken but in today's society these proactive steps are needed to protect our ability to write our own laws and to protect ourselves from judges that seek to legislate.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us. Also, you can read any of the bills I file on my website at: www.senate.mo.gov/bartle
Thank you again for making it possible for me to serve in the Missouri Senate.