

California Supreme Court to rule on same-sex marriage

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California's Prop 8 and H.R. 676: Thoughts on the Connectedness of Seemingly Disparate Issues

On March 5, the California Supreme Court is to take up the case of whether Proposition 8, the state constitutional ban on same-sex marriage that was passed by voters on Nov. 4, 2008, is legal.

The recently passed federal stimulus law contains funds to subsidize the expensive COBRA health insurance for laid off workers. President Obama rightly recognizes the economic cost of our inefficient for-profit "health care if you can afford it" system. But, as he does not yet endorse universal single-payer health care (H.R. 676), I can see we still have a long way to go to see efficiency and justice in our health care system.

But what does health insurance have to do with same-sex marriage? A lot for a same-sex couple who can't get family coverage. But that is the obvious issue. I'm thinking today of a less obvious issue and the hypocritical moralist politicians who allow the problem to endure. I am thinking today of those heterosexual couples--and there must be some out there--who wish to get married but won't because they lack health insurance.

The issue sprang to mind yesterday after I read a news article about a woman who married, got laid off, and then was diagnosed with breast cancer all within the space of a few months. Her cancer doctor canceled an appointment because she could not pay for the previous appointment she had. She is not eligible for the COBRA subsidy in the stimulus package because she was laid off before the bill was passed. (see: [No Job, No Insurance: Now What?](#))

What if events in this woman's life had been ordered in a different sequence? What if she had been laid off and diagnosed in the months before her marriage? Would she have gone through with it, even if her fiancé assured her that he was still willing to marry her?

I think it is a very interesting question. A purely hypothetical one for me--I don't even have a boyfriend, much less a fiancé--but I do have a health history that renders me uninsurable under our current system. And I could not possibly think of burdening a man I truly loved with the possibility of assuming the future costs of my health care. Because if he had no insurance himself, or if he lost a job under which he had me covered, or if individual private insurance refused to cover me for "pre-existing conditions", he could be financially ruined. As President Obama said in his recent address to a joint session of Congress, we have a bankruptcy in this country every 30 seconds because of medical bills. I know the traditional

vows are “for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health” but it is one thing to make your vows and take your chances, and it’s another thing to enter marriage knowing you have a bigger than average chance of devastating financial consequences from even a short hospital stay. I just couldn’t do it, no matter how badly I wanted to be married to the man. It wouldn’t be fair to him. I wonder how many other people out there feel the same? It may not be a big issue in the news, but if some fixed-income senior couples avoid marriage, even though they believe in it, because marriage will reduce their Social Security benefits, I’ll bet that there are other couples “living in sin” instead of marrying because of the health insurance issue.

And I would love to put a question to all those politicians who voted for the federal “Defense of Marriage Act” or who supported things like the vile Proposition 8. How many of you who so proudly “defend” marriage against loving, committed same-sex couples, also are throwing up financial roadblocks at the type of couples you think should marry, because you also oppose universal single-payer health care?

How about it, right-wing moralists? You vote our taxpayer money for ineffective abstinence-only programs for teens, and racist, classist programs designed to promote marriage and “responsible fatherhood,” but you exacerbate the number one cause of divorce in this country, money issues, which could also be keeping some couples from marrying in the first place, by refusing to back single-payer universal health care. “Socialism,” you say, disparagingly. So what? Socialism is also police and fire protection, street lights, and that bloated military budget you right-wingers call “defense,” but which any one with open eyes can see is really “offense” and “imperialism.”

You want to “defend” marriage? Take the major financial burden of health care off couples by supporting single-payer universal health. The bill is H.R. 676.

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