

For Faith &amp; Family

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A *For Faith & Family* Ministry Partner

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The institution of marriage—the covenantal union of a man and woman—has served for all of history as the bedrock of society. The marriage of one man and one woman is the fount out of which flow the critical values that sustain and benefit societies. There is incontrovertible sociological evidence that proves that when marriages fail, families are weakened; and when families are weakened, society as a whole feels the impact. It was not happenstance that the first institution established by God was marriage.

While marriages between men and women are the primary source of society's bedrock values, this critically important institution is under severe assault today. Divorce, substance abuse, domestic violence, negligence in fulfilling family responsibilities, and a myriad of other failings occur too often in marriages. Such failings occur with equal frequency among churchgoers and non-churchgoers. Consequently in our day the very foundation of society is threatened. For without the purest forms of compassion, mercy, cooperation, commitment, and sacrifice flowing out of strong heterosexual marriages, there is little prospect for the endurance and expansion of a just and civil society.

Dr. Richard Land  
President, SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

[Marriage amendment reintroduced in Senate](#) Supporters of a constitutional amendment to protect marriage have initiated what they hope will be a successful effort in the new Congress.

[House approves large increase in indecency fines](#) The U.S. House of Representatives voted 389-38 on Feb. 16 to increase dramatically the fines for indecency on radio and television broadcasts.

[Votes lined up to change rule, Frist says](#) Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said he has the votes needed to revise a rule in an effort to confirm President Bush's embattled judicial nominees. The Republican from Tennessee said, however, he does not know if he will call for the rule change the first time Democrats filibuster a nominee.

[FDA delays decision on 'morning-after' pill](#) The U.S. Food and Drug Administration failed to meet a Jan. 21 deadline for making a decision about over-the-counter (OTC) sale of a "morning-after" pill that many pro-life advocates oppose as an abortifacient.

[Land, others urge Bush to fight poverty](#) ERLC President Richard Land has joined a diverse group of evangelical leaders in asking President Bush to strengthen his effort to overcome hunger and poverty in his second term.

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### Marriage amendment reintroduced in Senate

Supporters of a constitutional amendment to protect marriage have initiated what they hope will be a successful effort in the new Congress.

Sen. Wayne Allard, R.-Colo., reintroduced the Marriage Protection Amendment, S.J.Res. 1, with 24 cosponsors Jan. 24. Two more cosponsors have since been added. A House of Representatives version has yet to be introduced.

The amendment would define marriage as the "union of a man and a woman." The text also says, "Neither this Constitution, nor the constitution of any State, shall be construed to require that marriage or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon any union other than the union of a man and a woman."

Shannon Royce, executive director of the Marriage Amendment Project of the Arlington Group, said the number of cosponsors is "very exciting."

"It demonstrates the importance of the issue to the American people and the understanding in the Senate that this issue must be addressed," said Royce, also a consultant for the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "I look forward to working with Southern Baptists to preserve the biblical and traditional definition of marriage."

The Arlington Group is a coalition of pro-family organizations working together on marriage and other issues. The ERLC is a member.

Attempts to pass an amendment last year after same-sex marriages were approved at state and local levels fell short in both the Senate and House. To be ratified, a federal amendment must be approved by two-thirds of both the Senate and House, as well as by three-fourths of the states.

President Bush restated his endorsement of a federal marriage amendment in his State of the Union speech Feb. 2.

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**House approves large increase in indecency fines**

The U.S. House of Representatives voted 389-38 on Feb. 16 to increase dramatically the fines for indecency on radio and television broadcasts.

If the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act, H.R. 310, becomes law, the measure would:

- Increase the maximum fine from \$32,500 to \$500,000 per violation for radio and television stations.
- Up the top penalty for an intentional violation by a performer or network from \$11,000 to \$500,000.
- Require a license revocation hearing for a station after a third violation.
- Mandate the Federal Communications Commission act on indecency complaints within 180 days.

"Hurray and kudos to the House for doing the right thing and taking the first step toward cleaning up the pigsty that popular entertainment has become," ERLC President Richard Land said. "The airwaves belong to the people, and the people's representatives need to enforce decency standards."

Sen. Sam Brownback, R.-Kan., is sponsoring a similar bill in the Senate, but his proposal would increase the maximum fine to \$325,000 for stations.

Neither bill would directly affect cable or satellite programming. The FCC is able to regulate only broadcast radio and television. On TV, that includes such networks as ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox.

Opponents of broadcast indecency are urging President Bush to name someone who will enforce the rules as FCC chairman. Michael Powell recently resigned from that post. You may express your viewpoint to the President by calling the White House comment line, (202) 456-1111, or by emailing through the ERLC's Web site, [www.faithandfamily.com](http://www.faithandfamily.com).

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#### **Votes lined up to change rule, Frist says**

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist said he has the votes needed to revise a rule in an effort to confirm President Bush's embattled judicial nominees. The Republican from Tennessee said, however, he does not know if he will call for the rule change the first time Democrats filibuster a nominee.

"We need to restore the over 200-year tradition and precedent of allowing every nominee of the President who has majority support an up-or-down vote on the floor of the United States Senate," Frist told *The Washington Times*, according to its Feb. 14 issue.

Democrats have labeled a rule change the "nuclear option," but Frist told *The Times* it was a "constitutional option. The nuclear option is what they did to me last year when they changed the precedent."

Also on Feb. 14, the President sent to the Senate 20 federal judicial nominees, including seven of the appeals court nominees who were successfully filibustered by Democrats in Bush's first term.

The Democrats filibustered 10 federal appeals court nominees in Bush's first term, and the President resubmitted the seven who remained as candidates. Sixty votes are needed to invoke cloture, which ends a filibuster. Though several of the nominees received a majority of votes in Bush's first term and would have been confirmed on the Senate floor, they did not gain the 60 votes for cloture.

ERLC President Richard Land applauded Frist's "courageous leadership in seeking to bring an end to this nefarious and unprecedented obstructionism."

"Senators have a right to advise and then vote either for or against a particular nominee," Land said. "They do not have a constitutional right to keep the Senate from voting. That is clearly contrary to the intent of the Constitution and is by definition unconstitutional. [I]t is well past time for it to stop."

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#### **FDA delays decision on 'morning-after' pill**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration failed to meet a Jan. 21 deadline for making a decision about over-the-counter (OTC) sale of a "morning-after" pill that many pro-life advocates oppose as an abortifacient.

Barr Pharmaceuticals Inc. confirmed it had received notice from the FDA it had been unable to complete its review of the New Jersey-based

firm's application for OTC sales of the pill.

If its application is approved, Barr would be able to sell the Plan B "emergency contraceptive" without a prescription to women 16 years of age and older. Plan B is now available by prescription only.

The FDA rejected a request from Barr in May for OTC sales, citing a lack of evidence about the pill's effect on girls 16 and younger. It gave the company an option of reapplying for OTC sales for females 16 and older and prescription sales for girls 15 and younger. Barr resubmitted its request under those guidelines.

The pill works by restricting ovulation in a woman. Supporters argue it will prevent unplanned pregnancies and abortions. Foes of "emergency contraception" say the method also can work after conception, blocking implantation of a tiny embryo in the uterine wall. In such a case, an abortion occurs, pro-lifers point out.

The "morning-after" pill is basically a heavier regimen of birth control pills begun within 72 hours of sexual intercourse.

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#### **Land, others urge Bush to fight poverty**

ERLC President Richard Land has joined a diverse group of evangelical leaders in asking President Bush to strengthen his effort to overcome hunger and poverty in his second term.

"A dramatic reduction in poverty, both here and abroad, would honor our Lord who called us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked," the Jan. 17 letter said. "It would also be a wonderful legacy for you to leave with the American people and indeed the world."

The letter said the United States ranks last among developed countries in governmental aide to combat worldwide poverty.

"Our nation has fallen far short of the increases in health and development assistance that you proposed," the letter said. "The richest nation in history can and must grasp the opportunity to lead."

While the leaders said their faith-based organizations would seek to heal the "poverty of the soul," they said such agencies could not solve "poverty of the wallet" by themselves. They called on Bush to place his administration on record in seeking to assure Americans "who work full time responsibly will be able to escape poverty and enjoy health insurance."

They urged the President not to allow effective, government, anti-poverty programs to be cut.

Among those signing the letter were Ronald Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action; speaker and author Josh McDowell; Jim Wallis, executive director of Sojourners; Todd Bassett, national commander of The Salvation Army; Thomas Trask, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, and David Neff, editor of *Christianity Today*. Presidents of more than 30 Christian colleges or seminaries also signed the letter.

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