



Senate of Pennsylvania

Senator Larry Farnese

1st Senatorial District

MEMO

Date: *May 10, 2011*
To: *All Senators*
From: *Senator Lawrence M. Farnese, Jr.*
Subject: *Co-sponsorship – Divorce Prohibition*

In the near future, I plan to introduce legislation that will prohibit the dissolution of marriage in Pennsylvania, except in certain cases.

This legislation is being introduced in response to a revival of the marriage protection constitutional amendment proposed in previous legislative sessions. The Marriage Protection Amendment would embed discrimination into our Commonwealth's Constitution by taking away the rights of some of our citizens simply based on their sexual orientation.

Proponents of the constitutional amendment have argued that preserving the sanctity of marriage by ensuring it is only valid between a man and a woman, will protect the family and keep its function from being eroded. However, most agree that divorce causes an inordinate amount of damage to families.

Pennsylvania Department of Health marriage statistics show that in 2009 there were more than half as many divorces and annulments as marriages in Pennsylvania. The United States has one of the highest divorce rates in the world. If we really want to ensure the family unit is kept intact and healthy, we will not move to discriminate against certain unions based on a perception of what a family should look like, but rather encourage couples who make a commitment to one another to keep that commitment.

In my bill, the divorce prohibition will include the following exceptions: willful and malicious desertion, cruel and barbarous treatment of a spouse, endangerment of the life or health of a spouse, a bigamous marriage or imposition of such indignities as to render a spouse's condition intolerable and life burdensome.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please contact Brandie Pifer at 7-5662 or bpifer@pasenate.com. If you have any questions, please contact Sally Keaveney at skeaveney@pasenate.com.