



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 18, 2012

General Mills Declares Its Opposition to Traditional Marriage

Minnesota cereal manufacturer General Mills has weighed in on the state's battle over marriage, saying it opposes the efforts by pro-family forces to define marriage as only between a man and a woman. The [St. Paul Pioneer Press](#) newspaper reported that General Mills breeched the corporate silence that has hung over the proposed marriage protection amendment, which Minnesotans will vote on in November, declaring that its management does not "believe the proposed constitutional amendment is in the best interests of our employees or our state economy — and as a Minnesota-based company we oppose it."



The Minneapolis [Star Tribune](#) reported that the food maker's CEO, Ken Powell, "voiced the company's opposition Wednesday [June 13] at a General Mills function attended by 400 gay and lesbian professionals, followed Thursday by a Web letter from the company's vice president for global diversity and inclusion, Ken Charles." In the online letter Charles appeared to dismiss the cultural impact of embracing homosexual marriage, explaining that while his company "doesn't normally take positions on ballot measures, this is a business issue that impacts our employees." He conceded that "there are strongly held views on both sides. We acknowledge those views, including those on religious grounds. We respect and defend the right of others to disagree. But we truly value diversity and inclusion — and that makes our choice clear."

Reflecting on the company's announcement, the *Star Tribune* noted: "Taking a corporate position on such a politically charged issue as gay marriage is a risky move for a big company like Golden Valley-based General Mills, with such well known brands as Cheerios and Yoplait. Yet companies nationwide are increasingly taking pro-gay marriage stances and going public on other political issues." The paper added that General Mills "is the second major Minnesota-based company to come out against the amendment.... Medical device maker St. Jude Medical first expressed opposition, as have Carlson Chairwoman Marilyn Carlson Nelson, former Medtronic CEO Bill George and longtime Minneapolis businessman and politician Wheelock Whitney."

Homosexual activist groups applauded General Mills' announcement, with "gay" lobbying group [Minnesotans United for All Families](#) releasing a statement arguing that the "business case against this amendment is straightforward and powerful. General Mills' decision to publicly oppose this hurtful, freedom-limiting amendment sends a clear message that neutrality on this amendment is simply not in Minnesota's best interest."

Insisting that embracing homosexual marriage is the only way "to keep our state a thriving and competitive place to live and do business," the group declared that "we must maintain our status as a



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national leader in attracting top talent. Doing so begins in November with the defeat of this amendment, and we're proud to stand with General Mills and other Minnesota businesses — both big and small — in refusing to limit the freedom to marry for some committed couples in our state."

But the pro-family group [Minnesota for Marriage](#), which has taken the lead in championing the marriage protection amendment, argued that General Mills' statement was made to appease homosexual activists and that its position contradicts that of a majority of Minnesotans. "It is very disappointing that General Mills has decided to play PC politics by pandering to a small but powerful interest group that is bent on redefining marriage, the core institution of society," said John Helmberger, chairman of Minnesota for Marriage. "Marriage is more than a commitment between two people who love each other. It was created by God for the care and well-being of the next generation. The amendment is about preserving marriage and making sure that voters always remain in control over the definition of marriage in our state, and not activist judges or politicians." Helmberger argued that in coming out against the marriage protection amendment, "General Mills is saying to Minnesotans and people all around the globe that marriage doesn't matter to them."

Brian Brown of the [National Organization for Marriage](#) noted that "marriage as the union of one man and one woman is profoundly in the common good, and it is especially important for children. General Mills makes billions marketing cereal to parents of young children. It has now effectively declared a war on marriage with its own customers when it tells the country that it is opposed to preserving traditional marriage, which is what the Minnesota Marriage Protection Amendment does."

A survey last year by the pro-family [Alliance Defense Fund](#) indicated that 63 percent of individuals with children living in their home believe that marriage should be defined as a union between one man and one woman. The survey found that only 35 percent of individuals with children at home disagreed with that definition, and overall, 62 percent of adults said they believe marriage is only the union of a man and a woman.

Brown predicted that General Mills' high-profile announcement "will go down as one of the dumbest corporate PR stunts of all time. It's ludicrous for a big corporation to intentionally inject themselves into a divisive social issue like gay marriage. It's particularly dumb for a corporation that makes billions selling cereal to the very people they just opposed."

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