



Redefining Marriage Not Above Obama's "Pay Grade"

That Barack Obama has "evolved" into a President promoting "marriage equality," meaning the "right" to a legally recognized same-sex marriage, was the "history-making event" of the past week. Less historic, perhaps, but no less significant is the fact that less than four years ago, Senator Barack Obama, then the Democratic Party's candidate for President, was asked by Pastor Rick Warren at the [Saddleback Civil Forum](#), "At what point does a baby get human rights, in your view?"



"Well, you know, " Obama began haltingly, "I think that whether you're looking at it from a theological perspective or a scientific perspective, answering that question with specificity is, you know, is above my pay grade."

Apparently redefining marriage is not above the President's pay grade. Whether that is a greater or lesser challenge than healing the planet and halting the rise of the oceans — two of the results he prophesied would result from his successful election campaign of 2008 — the President has not yet told us.

On the surface, the President was not trying to impose his freshly evolved view of marriage onto the nation. As he said last week, the issue would have to be worked out at the local level. Interviewer Robin Roberts of ABC News was quick to reply that it is not being "worked out" on the local level, as evidenced by the vote in North Carolina last week to amend that state's Constitution to define marriage as it has been understood for millennia, as a union between man and woman. And 30 states have adopted similar definitions. Only six states and the District of Columbia currently grant legal status to same-sex marriages. So what Ms. Roberts meant, apparently, is that it's not being "worked out" in a way that liberals and "progressives" might approve. But the President said different communities or states will come up with different answers and he was merely stating his personal opinion.

But surely President Obama knew and could well imagine the impact on the debate that a definitive statement from the White House would have. It was not as Barack Q. Citizen that Obama invited Robin Roberts of ABC News to the executive mansion for an interview and an occasion for him to unburden himself of his evolved thought on same-sex marriage. (When was the last time you had Robin Roberts over to your home or office for an interview?) He knew he was putting the considerable weight of the President's "bully pulpit" on the side of legitimizing same-sex marriage.

How this will help or hurt the President's reelection is not clear. Surely it did not hinder his efforts at the Hollywood fundraiser he attended right after he made his "historic" announcement. The President's campaign reportedly picked up \$15 million in contributions or pledges in the few hours Obama spend at the home of film star George Clooney. But if the pollsters are to be believed, the jobs and the economy in general is the overwhelming issue affecting how people plan to vote this year. For the relatively small number of people who will vote, one way or the other, based on their beliefs about same-sex marriage, chances are those voters have already made their decisions and they are not likely to be swayed by any



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 14, 2012

amount of eloquence from either side.

But Obama is surely leaving a large number of Catholics and conservative Christians behind as he gets out front as the leader of what conservative columnist and culture warrior Pat Buchanan has called “secularism’s next great moral advance into post-Christian America.” In just a little over three years, Obama has become a lightning rod for opposition to the social agenda of secular liberalism, particularly on the part of the Catholic bishops. Three years ago this month, the wrath of a few score bishops and any number of lay Catholics was aimed at the University of Notre Dame for bestowing an honorary degree on Obama, the nation’s most conspicuous champion of abortion “rights” when the President came to deliver the commencement address at the hallowed South Bend campus.

More recently the bishops and others have been galvanized into opposition to a ruling from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that religious institutions, other than houses of worship must not be exempt under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act from providing contraceptive coverage for employees. And now the president’s pronouncement on “gay” marriage has further aroused leaders of a church that continues to view homosexual behavior as the American Psychiatric Association described it prior to 1973 — as an objective psychological disorder, and one that, when acted upon results in serious sin against God and nature.

To be sure, the Catholic bishops and those who take seriously their admonitions were not likely to be in Obama’s corner anyway. But the President may find a softening of support from the African-American population, particularly among black preachers. While black Americans tend to vote overwhelmingly Democratic, they are also a demographic group most resistant to the concept of same-sex marriage. Surely, socially conservative black Christians will not easily be persuaded to vote for Mitt Romney, a Mormon who earlier in his career portrayed himself as a more effective champion of “gay rights” than Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. But their enthusiasm in getting out the vote for Obama might be somewhat diminished.

At least Obama has accomplished one thing in the short term. The cover story in the current issue of [Newsweek](#) (“The First Gay President”) is not about an economy that has remained sluggish and underperforming through three years of Obama’s stimulus and “investments.” The power of incumbency is often less than it seems, to Presidents as well as to the public. But never underestimate the power of the President to change the subject.

Photo: President Barack Obama discussed his views on same-sex marriage in an interview with Robin Roberts of ABC’s Good Morning America, in the Cabinet Room of the White House,

May 9, 2012, in Washington: AP Images



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