



July 7, 2015

National
Religious
Broadcasters

The Honorable John Boehner
Office of the Speaker
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Office of the Majority Leader
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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Christian
Communicators
Impacting
the World

Dear Speaker Boehner and Leader McConnell:

As President and CEO of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), I write to respectfully request that the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate take immediate action to ensure the rights of American citizens who are deeply troubled by the recent action of the U.S. Supreme Court to impose "gay marriage" nationwide. Specifically, I ask that Congress approve the *First Amendment Defense Act* (H.R. 2802, S. 1598) and advance it to the President's desk for signature into law.

The majority ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* was a textbook example of judicial activism. Not only was it a slap in the face of the principles of federalism and democratic governance, but it showed disdain for a holy institution that has been the bedrock of human society for millennia. Like *Roe v. Wade*, we must limit the damage of this devastating and overreaching judgment.

Related to this decision, another fundamental and pressing concern is the government's intentions for the clearly delineated guarantee in the U.S. Constitution that citizens may freely exercise their religion. As you know, when asked during oral argument if a ruling imposing "gay marriage" nationwide could lead to a college losing its tax-exempt status for adhering to its convictions on marriage, U.S. Solicitor General Donald Verrilli admitted, "...it's certainly going to be an issue.... I don't deny that, Justice Alito. It is – it is going to be an issue." Moreover, in his dissenting opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts warned, "The majority graciously suggests that religious believers may continue to 'advocate' and 'teach' their views of marriage.... The First Amendment guarantees, however, the freedom to 'exercise' religion. Ominously, that is not a word the majority uses."

The statements of the Executive and Judicial Branches give us pause. I urge the Legislative Branch to actively preserve and protect citizens' rights in the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Please pass the *First Amendment Defense Act*. This bill is simply a shield against federal agents who might be tempted to use tax treatment, licensing, grants, and the like to coerce or discriminate against individuals or organizations that merely wish to live in light of their religious conviction that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. I hope that Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle will rush to approve legislation defending such basic freedoms.

Thank you for your consideration and your leadership of the U.S. Congress.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jerry Johnson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jerry A. Johnson, Ph.D.
President & CEO