

**JOINT PRESS RELEASE**  
by  
**Interfaith Alliance of Iowa Action Fund**  
**One Iowa**  
**American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa**

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**IOWA HOUSE LEADERSHIP CONTINUES HURTFUL CAMPAIGN  
AGAINST MARRIAGE FOR LOVING COMMITTED COUPLES**

Proposed Marriage Discrimination Act would violate the Civil Rights of all Iowans

**DES MOINES** – Today, Interfaith Alliance of Iowa Action Fund, One Iowa, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa called on Iowans to oppose House Study Bill 50, or the Marriage Discrimination Act. Proposed by Representatives Rich Anderson and Curt Swaim, the bill says that any business, organization or individual could deny services and public accommodations to any married couple based on individual religious beliefs. The bill would allow goods, services, and public accommodations to be denied to any married couple in the state, including interracial couples, couples of different faith backgrounds, and same-sex couples.

“This bill crosses a line that is not representative of Iowa values,” said Connie Ryan Terrell, executive director of Interfaith Alliance of Iowa. “We are disappointed that some state representatives continue to waste their valuable legislative time on divisive legislation designed specifically to harm some Iowa families. Instead, we implore them to refocus their efforts toward the issues which will bring all Iowans together and will bring jobs and economic prosperity to our state.”

“The Marriage Discrimination Act, quite simply, is another hurtful attack on the institution of marriage,” said Carolyn Jenison, executive director of One Iowa. “The Varnum decision clearly provides for religious protections, and religious marriage remains distinct and protected under Iowa law. Regardless of what you think of marriage equality, Iowans should see this bill for what it is – clear discrimination against all Iowans.”

“The rights of churches and other religious groups to deal with marriage as they deem appropriate is already secure and under no threat in Iowa,” said Ben Stone, executive director of the ACLU of Iowa. “The ACLU recognizes this bill for what it is: an effort to legitimize discrimination under the guise of religious liberty.”

The Varnum decision protects the rights of religious individuals by allowing faith communities to still reserve the right to choose who may or may not marry in accordance with their faith traditions.

The Marriage Discrimination Act would codify discrimination, and make it easier for discrimination towards any married couple in the state. Examples of how this bill would harm couples include:

- A restaurant owner could break a signed contract with a same-sex couple to host a wedding reception because they disagree with their relationship;
- A hotel-owner could deny an interracial couple a room on their wedding night because they disagree with their relationship;
- A florist could break their signed contract to provide flowers at the wedding of a Catholic and Lutheran because they disagree with their relationship.

“Loving, committed couples, regardless of their background, deserve the opportunity to have a happy, joyous wedding day, and this bill will make it harder for that to happen,” said Jenison. “We are now four weeks into the legislative session. Yet, the Iowa House has yet to do anything that will create one job for the 100,000 people out of work in this state. Iowans need to come together, and tell Speaker Paulsen, Rep. Anderson, and Rep. Swaim to stop these senseless attacks on marriage, and get back to the work you were sent to Des Moines to do.”

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*Founded in 1996, the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa and Action Fund is a non-partisan organization working to protect both faith and freedom in Iowa. We believe it is imperative that, in a healthy democracy, respect is shown for the religious freedom and beliefs of every person and that this is best promoted by maintaining a healthy separation between church and state.*

*Our beliefs intersect with many issues of civic life and policy including support of separation of church and state, public education, marriage equality, economic justice, and comprehensive immigration reform.*

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*One Iowa is the state's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) advocacy organization, committed to full equality for LGBT individuals, including the freedom to marry.*

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*Since 1935, The American Civil Liberties Union of Iowa has worked in the courts, the Legislature, and throughout the state to defend and preserve the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.*