

Should pro-life affiliates break ties over gay marriage?

BY CALVIN FREIBURGER, Wed Aug 07, 2013

(LiveActionNews) - Can't we all just get along? Apparently not in Ohio, where LifeSiteNews reports that the National Right to Life Committee has cut the cord to Cleveland Right to Life because the latter has criticized pro-life Republican Sen. Rob Portman for supporting...same-sex marriage?

In June, CRTL announced that they were expanding their mission to include the defense of marriage, arguing that the move was necessary in order to cultivate an enduring culture of life:

“The prolife movement must recognize that without this inclusion the efforts to protect human life are diminished. If we are to hasten the end of the culture of death in

America we must recognize the role of a stable family that has at its core;

committed parents.” said Cleveland Right to Life board member,



Jerry Cirino. Social and scientific studies continue to support the role of both mother and father in children's lives. In a recent report by the Census Bureau the negative impact of single parent households on society is enormous and while CRTL affirms their commitment to support for all children in the womb, the organization also recognizes that single gender parenting should be recognized for what it is – a less than perfect situation for the child.

The NRLC was not persuaded, writing on July 17:

Recently, Cleveland Right to Life announced that it has embraced an advocacy agenda that includes issues beyond the right to life. Moreover, it promptly issued public criticisms of and implicit political threats against a U.S. Senator who has supported the right-to-life position on every vote that has come before the Senate, and who is a sponsor of major NRLC-backed bills – because the chapter disagrees with his position on a non-right-to-life issue.

By these actions, Cleveland Right to Life has violated National Right to Life policy, causing the chapter to disaffiliate itself from NRLC.

We respectfully insist that you remove from your website the claim that you are affiliated with NRLC, and from this point forward, cease and desist from any representation that “Cleveland Right to Life” is affiliated with the National Right to Life Committee.

According to LSN, CRTL “has never had a direct affiliation with NRTL, only a tiered relationship that is maintained through the state organization, Ohio Right to Life,” with whom CRTL remains in good standing.

As a conservative, I happen to strongly agree with CRTL's thesis that marriage protection is essential to a comprehensive view of a healthy society, and if CRTL wanted to reinvent themselves into a general social conservative organization, more power to them. That groups like Family Research Council and the Heritage Foundation tackle multiple issues doesn't prevent them from working with pro-lifers.

However, their name remains Cleveland *Right to Life*, and as much overlap as there is between the pro-life and pro-marriage communities, any issue-based organization's members and supporters have a right to expect an agenda focused on that issue. Branching out into separate causes carries the potential for distraction, confusion, and roadblocks to building as broad a coalition as possible for unborn rights—an area where our movement could sometimes use some work. You can't blame NRLC for wanting their affiliates to keep their eye on the ball.

Then again, publicly severing all ties to CRTL seems a little extreme, no? Admittedly, I don't presume to know what behind-the-scenes communications took place prior to NRLC's letter, but it certainly doesn't read like it's interested in meeting the Cleveland group halfway, or like it was in reaction to further slights by them—it makes pretty clear that CRTL's marriage advocacy and criticism of Portman were sufficient deal-breakers all on their own.

Stray from right-to-life issues though CRTL did, they're still dedicated to fighting for the unborn, and even if their criticism of Portman ever expanded to full-blown opposition, it's not as if they would advocate replacing him with a Senator who's less pro-life. If working together to end the scourge of abortion requires pro-lifers to set aside their differences on other issues, then such a magnanimous spirit of commitment to the big picture should cut both ways.