



Judiciary Committee News

United States Senate
Senator Patrick Leahy, Chairman

*From the Committee Office of Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)
Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing On:
"S. 598, The Respect for Marriage Act:
Assessing the Impact of DOMA on American Families"
July 20, 2011*

On the White House Announcement Of Support for the Respect for Marriage Act

- Excerpt of Transcript of White House Press Briefing, July 19, 2011
- Comment of Senator Patrick Leahy
- Statement of Center for American Progress Action Fund
- Statement from the Human Rights Campaign

White House Announces President's Support For Respect For Marriage Act

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

July 19, 2011

PRESS BRIEFING
BY PRESS SECRETARY JAY CARNEY

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

Q Yes, the President has said in the past that he opposes the Defense of Marriage Act, but he is yet to endorse the Respect for Marriage Act, which is the specific piece of legislation --

MR. CARNEY: With Senator Feinstein?

Q -- aimed to repeal the bill. Tomorrow, the Senate will hold the first hearing into that bill. Is the administration ready to endorse that bill?

MR. CARNEY: I can tell you that the President has long called for a legislative repeal of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act, which continues to have a real impact on the lives of real people -- our families, friends and neighbors.

He is proud to support the Respect for Marriage Act, introduced by Senator Feinstein and Congressman Nadler, which would take DOMA off the books once and for all.

This legislation would uphold the principle that the federal government should not deny gay and lesbian couples the same rights and legal protections as straight couples.

Q And a follow-up. In line with that, the administration is also still in court defending "don't ask, don't tell." When is -- tomorrow also will be three weeks since the President said that certification will come in weeks, not months. Has the President spoken with Secretary Panetta or Admiral Mullen about these certifications since he made that statement, and where does it stand?

MR. CARNEY: I don't know if the President has had those conversations, either with Secretary Panetta or his predecessor or with Admiral Mullen. What the President said remains the case on our expectation, but I don't have any more information for you on that.

#####

U.S. SENATOR PATRICK LEAHY

VERMONT

Comment Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
On President Obama's Support For The Respect For Marriage Act
July 19, 2011

"I applaud the President's decision to endorse the Respect for Marriage Act, and I join with many Vermont families in celebrating his decision. Earlier this year, I was proud to join Senator Feinstein and others to introduce The Respect for Marriage Act, a bill that would repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, and restore the rights of all lawfully married couples. The President understands that this civil rights issue affects thousands of American families. In these difficult economic times, we should do all we can to remove barriers to fairness and security. I have scheduled a hearing to examine the legislation in the Senate Judiciary Committee, and welcome this announcement on the eve of that hearing."

#####

From our partner organization, the Center for American Progress:

CAP's Winnie Stachelberg Applauds White House Endorsement of Respect for Marriage Act

Contact: Christina DiPasquale

Phone: 202.481.8181

Email: cdipasquale@americanprogress.org

Washington, D.C. — The Center for American Progress applauds the Obama administration's endorsement today of the Respect for Marriage Act, or RMA, which would repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act, or DOMA, and released the following statement from Winnie Stachelberg, Senior Vice President for External Affairs at the Center for American Progress:

DOMA is a flagrantly discriminatory law that serves no good, rational, or useful purpose. It denies rights to gay couples and their families simply because of their sexual orientation. Passage of the RMA would represent a huge leap forward on the path toward full equality for same-sex couples in the United States. The administration's support of the RMA is important and greatly welcomed.

The RMA would restore federal marriage benefits and protections for legally married same-sex couples and, in addition to repealing DOMA, would provide married same-sex couples with certainty that federal marriage benefits and protections would remain in place if a couple marries in a state where these marriages are legal but then moves or travels to a state where they are not currently legal or recognized.

National polls [consistently show](#) that a majority of the American people support allowing gay couples to marry.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 19, 2011

Charles Joughin | Charles.joughin@hrc.org | (202) 423-2885

HRC Statement on White House Support for Respect for Marriage Act

WASHINGTON – Today at a White House news conference, Press Secretary Jay Carney announced President Obama’s support for the Respect for Marriage Act, a bill to repeal the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act that denies federal recognition to legally married same-sex couples. The bill will be the subject of a historic hearing tomorrow morning before the Senate Judiciary Committee. Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese, who will himself be testifying tomorrow in favor of the bill, released the following statement:

“We thank the President for his support of the Respect for Marriage Act. He has repeatedly expressed his desire to see the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act repealed and his Justice Department has taken the historic step of ending its defense of that odious law in court. By supporting this legislation, the President continues to demonstrate his commitment to ending federal discrimination against tens of thousands of lawfully married same-sex couples.”

The Human Rights Campaign is America’s largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all.

###