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PRO-FAMILY GROUP URGES LEGISLATORS TO ALLOW PEOPLE OF ALASKA TO VOTE ON SAME SEX BENEFITS ISSUE

Alaska Family Council sees upcoming legislative special session as opportunity to clarify intent of 1998 constitutional marriage amendment defining marriage.

The special session called by Governor Murkowski affords an opportunity and obligation for Alaska legislators to once again review the intent of the 1998 constitutional marriage amendment which defined marriage as a union between one man and one woman. The marriage amendment, voted for by nearly 70 percent of Alaskan voters, has been rendered ineffectual by an October 2005 Alaska Supreme Court ruling mandating that gay partners of public employees must receive taxpayer-funded benefits equivalent to those of married employees. The Alaska Supreme Court ruling ordered the legislature to provide regulations by January of 2007 determining what qualifies as a same-sex partner.

The Alaska Family Council believes that many, if not most, of the 152,000 Alaskans who voted to approve the amendment eight years ago assumed the amendment limited benefits associated with marriage to those that are legally married. Resolutions clarifying as much were introduced during the last legislative session but were not brought to a floor vote in either the State Senate or House.

If same-sex benefits are adopted by the State during this special session, according to the Alaska Family Council, it is highly unlikely that the legislature will ever repeal them. The Alaska Legislature, recently summoned to a November 13th special session by Governor Murkowski, must bring the resolutions to a floor vote and give the people of Alaska the opportunity to determine what type of relationships are privileged in public policy and deserving of benefits.

The legislators have an obligation to once again allow Alaskans to have their say in what kind of partnership is due benefits historically only given to married couples. Commissioner of Administration, Scott Nordstrand told the governor in a recent letter, "*Caution and good public policy demand that I recommend the Legislature be given the opportunity to address this matter.*"

"This mandate and deadline given to the legislature by the Alaska Supreme Court are misguided and thwart the will of the people." said Jim Minnery, President of the Alaska Family Council. *"More than 152,000 Alaskans spoke very clearly in 1998 about what kind of relationships should be privileged in public policy. We applaud Lt. Gov. Leman's determination to ensure that the will of the people is represented regarding this important issue."* Prior to the special session, the Alaska Family Council will be working with State legislators to once again sponsor resolutions further defining the exclusive nature and associated benefits of marriage.

The Alaska Family Council is an Alaska based non-profit organization created in 2005 to educate, inform and activate citizens about public policy issues that impact marriage, children and families.

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