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Freedom to Marry Coalition:

I represent concerned citizens who are working towards marriage equality nationwide. We promote fairness for all families, including same-sex couples and children being raised by gay parents, and will speak out about sexual orientation discrimination.

In 2004, Montanans voted on and passed an anti-marriage constitutional amendment, which prohibits same-sex marriage. Massachusetts and Connecticut have both legalized gay marriage. Several states, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island, pledge non-discrimination against same-sex marriages. Many others offer protection for same-sex couples, but do not grant them the freedom to marry. Vermont, New Jersey, and New Hampshire all accept civil unions. Oregon and California accept broad domestic partnerships. Washington, Hawaii, Maine, the District of Columbia, and Maryland all offer small amounts of protection for same-sex marriages as well. This shows that only a little over a fourth of the states accept or offer any protection to same-sex couples. This percentage needs to change.

Gay male sex was criminal in nine states until 2003 when in *Lawrence v. Texas*, the Supreme Court found that grounds of moral disapproval were insufficient to criminalize sex acts between two consenting adults. Many who oppose same-sex marriage oppose it simply because they believe it is immoral. Moral disapproval should not be grounds to deny two people who are in love the freedom to marry. Religious reasons are not legitimate when trying to prevent a law from being passed. Separation of church and state needs to be considered when debating religious arguments from citizens opposing same-sex marriage because the Bible says it is wrong.

In statistics taken from couples filing cases for gay marriage in America, the couples fighting for the right to marry have been together for an average of 10 years, whereas many heterosexuals consider 5-7 months an appropriate amount of time to be together before considering marriage. If a couple can marry after knowing each other for only 5 months, why can't a couple that has been in love for 10 years have equal opportunity?

As shown from the entries above, the treatment of same-sex couples in America is wildly unfair. As stated in the United States Constitution: All men are created equal. If heterosexuals have the right to marry, homosexuals should as well. We should legalize same-sex marriage in Montana. By accomplishing this, we will be one step closer to marriage equality nationwide.

I will support legislation that promotes marriage equality, and I will oppose bills that promote sexual orientation discrimination.

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