

UPDATED: The “Respect for Marriage Act” Is Anything But

According to reports, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (NY) is readying the misleadingly named “Respect for Marriage Act” for a vote. While the name of the bill makes it [sound as if it affirms and supports marriage](#), it would instead redefine it in the law, this time from the federal legislature. This bill would uproot marriage, at least legally, and ground it in nothing more than abstract desires, effectively redefining it from the institution that has long offered a [bedrock for civilization to thrive](#). That original bedrock reflected the biological realities of who men and women are and served the needs and best interests of children through the legal recognition of mothers and fathers.

This new bill would not only replace the [1996 Defense of Marriage Act](#), which was signed into law by President Bill Clinton; it would also shore up and extend the impact of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the landmark Supreme Court decision that overturned marriage laws in dozens of states, enshrined same-sex marriage as the law of the land, and redefined the institution of marriage by judicial fiat.

The “Respect for Marriage Act” is the product of fear from the political left. In the *Dobbs* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that *Roe v. Wade* was wrongly decided, and therefore returned the task of abortion law-making to the states. The fear here is that a [conservative Supreme Court could overturn Obergefell](#)—although only one justice has indicated willingness to do that—and send the question of same-sex marriage back to the states.

When the House voted on this bill, 47 Republicans joined every single Democrat to advance the bill to the Senate. While it’s not unusual for bills designed more for moral posturing than real progress to come out of the left-leaning House, more than [a few self-described “conservatives”](#) do not understand what marriage is or the essential role it plays in a healthy society. If this bill could find the support of just 10 Republicans in the Senate who share this fuzzy view of marriage, it will pass, securing the federal government’s claim on marriage and creating even less room in public life for people who object to redefined marriage. In other words, this bill will create more situations like Jack Phillips, Barronelle Stutzman, and [Lorie Smith](#).

Five Republican senators have indicated that they will support the bill: Portman, Tillis, Collins, Murkowski, and Johnson. And, reportedly, at least another 6 or so are on the fence. Sens. Romney, Collins, and Baldwin have [proposed an amendment](#) aimed to alleviate fears about religious liberty,

but don't be fooled. Their amendment would protect clergy—not businesses, employers, and non-profit organizations, whose viewpoint on marriage being between a man and a woman is left unprotected.

While there are some who sincerely (but wrongly) believe in this bill, there are others who believe—like too many Americans—that the Supreme Court has settled this issue. It has not, because, like with the issue of abortion, it cannot. These Republicans do not care about protecting conscience rights. They only hope to see this controversial issue behind them once and for all. So, we must convince them otherwise.

Even more, this bill will further enable the redefinition of marriage to include relational arrangements beyond what Obergefell created. Obergefell took marriage from a sexually diverse institution to a same-sex institution. At the time, the T (for “transgender”) was largely absent from the orientation and identity acronym. Now, the T runs the show, and the very idea of a gender binary is seen as oppressive, outdated, and harmful. It is the LGBTQ community that is referred to throughout this bill, which means that if this bill passes, marriage will become a genderless institution by force of law. This will harm children and further confuse reality.

People of faith and conscience must act. The best next step with the short amount of time we have on our hands is to call your senators, especially if they are Republicans, especially if they have not been clear on where they stand on the Respect for Marriage Act. If you are in a state with Sens. Blunt (MO), Burr (NC), Cassidy (LA), Capito (WV), Ernst (IA), Fischer (NE), Grassley (IA), McConnell (KY), Romney (UT), Sullivan (AK), or Toomey (PA), make especially sure to contact them.

[Because time is short, please call their offices.](#) Remind them that political convenience is not worth the cultural persecution that this will bring, and that the Romney, Collins, and Baldwin amendment is the worst kind of capitulation—it doesn't protect the viewpoint of marriage being between a man and a woman, outside of clergy. Remind them they were elected to protect the conscience rights of their constituents. Remind them that you expect them to vote by conscience and not convenience.

This Breakpoint was co-authored by Dr. Timothy Padgett. For more resources to live like a Christian in this cultural moment, go to colsoncenter.org.