

## Our Family Deserves Equal Rights

By William and Martha Lewis

We have two sons – one gay and one straight. After 17 years together, our son John and our son-in-law Stuart married each other earlier this year in San Francisco. Our son Jim and our daughter-in-law Beth married 20 years ago in Chicago.

We love our children equally. We raised them side by side here in Kansas City. For years, they and their spouses have come back to Kansas City to visit us and care for us as we have become older.

Proponents of Amendment 2 seek to write unequal treatment of ours sons and families like ours into the Missouri Constitution. The Constitution states that “all persons are created equal and are entitled to equal rights ... under the law ....” It should remain that way. We did not raise one of our sons to be inferior.

When our son Jim and his wife Beth come to Kansas City, they have innumerable rights and protections as a legally married couple that John and Stuart do not have because Missouri law already does not recognize same-sex marriage. For instance, should John or Stuart be injured or ill and become hospitalized in Missouri, they have no assurance that they would be able to care for each other in the hospital and participate in each other’s medical decisions. Only marriage can provide that assurance and many other such rights and responsibilities.

This unequal treatment should not be put in the Constitution. The Constitution states that giving citizens the security of equality under the law is a principal purpose of government, and “when government does not confer this security, it fails in its chief design.”

We understand how people unfamiliar with same-sex couples may have been confused by the same-sex marriages that have taken place across the country this year. We might have been confused, too, if we did not have a gay son and son-in-law. But we are confident that if you knew our sons and their spouses, you would support their having equal rights and legal protections. A friend of ours recently found himself amidst a group of people speaking against same-sex marriage. Our friend said simply, “You might feel differently if you had a lesbian or gay child.”

Amendment 2 divides families one from another. It makes families like ours less than equal members of the community.

Same-sex couples like John and Stuart value marriage and family enormously. After 17 years of waiting, they married within the first hour that San Francisco performed same-sex marriages.

We urge you to vote against Amendment 2 and in favor of inclusiveness and respect, family and marriage, and basic equal rights.

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