



“Marriage Protection Week” Sponsors: Are They Really Interested in “Building Strong and Healthy Marriages?”

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Introduction

A coalition of 29 conservative political and religious organizations is sponsoring “Marriage Protection Week,” (MPW) from October 12 to 18, 2003. The organizations include the National Religious Broadcasters, Focus on the Family, which has an annual budget of \$126 million, and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the official ministry of the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, the nation’s second largest religious denomination. The co-sponsors plan to reach millions of Americans during the week through events at thousands of churches, programs on Christian television stations, and a network of several hundred radio stations.

On October 3, 2003, President Bush issued an official proclamation in support of MPW, stating:¹

Marriage is a sacred institution, and its protection is essential to the continued strength of our society. Marriage Protection Week provides an opportunity to focus our efforts on preserving the sanctity of marriage and on building strong and healthy marriages in America.

Given the scope and magnitude of this effort, the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force conducted a content analysis of the websites of the leading MPW sponsors and researched their financial resources. The purpose of this research was two-fold. First, because the President says MPW is an opportunity to focus on building strong and healthy marriages, and eleven of the 29 sponsoring groups use the word “family” or “families” in their name or mission statement, we wanted to assess these organizations’ actual focus on marriage and families. Second, we wanted to determine the accuracy of many of these groups’ repeated assertions that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) advocacy organizations are elitist, well-funded and politically powerful.

¹ Marriage Protection Week, 2003, By the President of the United States of America: A Proclamation. (2003, October 3). Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/10/20031003-12.html>

Our research revealed the following findings:

1. The leading co-sponsors of MPW focus disproportionately on homosexuality over key issues that impact marriages and families, such as divorce, poverty, domestic violence, child support, and lack of health insurance.
2. The financial resources of the 13 organizations co-sponsoring MPW for which income data are available dwarf the resources of the top 13 national LGBT equal rights advocacy organizations by a margin of four to one (\$217 million compared to just \$54 million).
3. There is no focus whatsoever in the mission or planned activities of MPW on activities that would help to “build strong and healthy marriages in America.”²

The following report discusses these findings in more detail, and is the first in a series of briefs that will analyze the conservative right wing political movement in the U.S. Through both quantitative and qualitative research, the Policy Institute will continue to examine many of these organizations who capitalize and profit from homophobia in order to fund their broader political agendas.

Finding #1: The leading co-sponsors of “Marriage Protection Week” focus disproportionately on homosexuality over key issues that impact marriages and families, such as divorce, lack of health insurance, domestic violence, and poverty.

Logically, groups supporting efforts to “protect marriage” would address the factors that negatively impact American families and may eventually cause divorce. However, our research revealed that none of the MPW sponsors devote significant resources on their websites to these issues. For example, according to the National Center for Health, a division within the US Department of Health and Human

² Fancher, B., & Parker, P. (2003, October 13). Pro-family leaders speak up as ‘marriage protection week’ kicks off. AgapePress. Retrieved October 13, 2003 from <http://headlines.agapepress.org/printerver.asp>

Services, there are many factor that increase the likelihood of divorce, including access to quality education, family income, work status, and community:³

First marriages are more likely to disrupt in communities with higher unemployment, lower median family income, and a higher percent of families below poverty level or receiving public assistance.

The major groups sponsoring MPW pay *much* less attention to these concerns than they do to the alleged and unsubstantiated threat posed by homosexuality. This is particularly surprising since eleven of the 29 sponsoring groups use the word “family” or “families” in their name or mission statement. In fact, a basic content analysis of the documents publicly available on the websites of the major MPW sponsors revealed that they overwhelmingly focus on homosexuality:⁴

- The American Family Association, a \$14 million-a-year nonprofit dedicated to “chang[ing] the culture to reflect Biblical truth,” had 334 documents containing the word “homosexual” available on its website, but only 47 containing the word “divorce,” 29 with the word “poverty,” 17 with the words “domestic violence,” five with the words “child support,” and four with “health insurance.”
- The Family Research Council, a \$10 million-a-year group that “shapes public debate and formulates public policy that values human life and upholds the institutions of marriage and the family,” had 203 documents on its website containing the word “homosexual,” only 39 containing the word “divorce,” 37 with “poverty,” 26 with the words “domestic violence,” 18 with the words “health insurance,” and only two with the words “child support.”
- Concerned Women for America, a \$12 million-a-year “public policy women’s organization,” had 602 documents on its website that contain the word “homosexual,” but only 80 with “poverty,” only 70 with the word “divorce,” 19 with the words “domestic violence,” and only six containing “child support.” This is especially striking given a June 2003 survey of over 3,000 women conducted over two years by Princeton Research Associates, which revealed that the top concerns of American

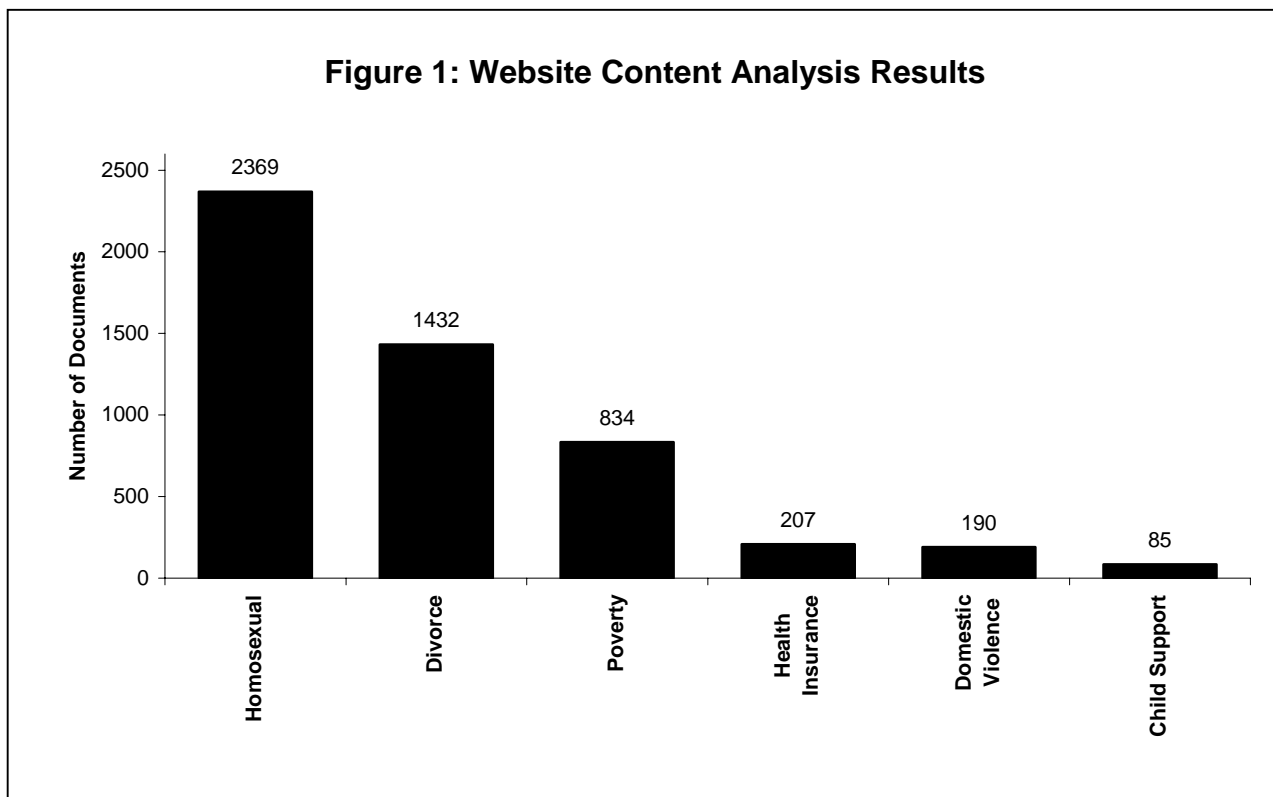
³ Bramlett MD and Mosher WD. *Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the United States*. National Center for Health Statistics. Vital Health Stat 23(22) at 28. (2002).

⁴ Nine of the 29 co-sponsoring organizations had websites that allow users to search all of the documents available on the site. We searched these sites using the keywords indicated. Website searches were conducted between October 2, 2003 and October 10, 2003.

women were domestic violence and sexual assault, and equal pay for equal work.⁵ The Concerned Women for American website had only 71 documents containing the word “rape” and no documents on pay equity.

- Focus on the Family, a \$126 million-a-year religious right behemoth, mentioned “divorce” in 841 documents, “homosexual” in 740 documents, “poverty” in 212 documents, “domestic violence” in 85 document, “health insurance” in only 36 documents, and “child support” in a mere 20 documents.

Combined, the nine web sites of co-sponsoring organizations mention “homosexual” in a total of 2,369 documents, but “divorce” was only included in 1,432 documents. “Poverty” was mentioned in 832 documents, “health insurance” in 207 documents, “domestic violence” in just 190 documents, and “child support” was included in only 85 documents.



⁵ Peterson, K. S. (2003, June 23). “USA’s women have ‘new set of priorities,’ poll suggests.” *USA Today*. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2003-06-23-womens-poll_x.htm

The disproportionate number of articles referencing homosexuality goes far beyond scriptural interpretation or an analysis of the alleged “threat” posed by same-sex couples to the institution of marriage. Many contain remarkably hostile language towards LGBT Americans. At least three of the MPW sponsors use intemperate language to promote intolerance and explicitly promote discrimination against gay people. Within this context, President Bush’s official sanctioning of MPW is even more disturbing.

For example, the American Family Association, criticizing efforts to end widespread anti-LGBT harassment and violence in public schools, recently wrote:⁶

What Would Jesus Do? ... He may appear “hate-filled,” “intolerant” or “bigoted.” ... Many times He openly exhibited a holy, righteous anger and zeal for “His Father’s business.” Jesus rebuked and exposed ... It’s high time Christians - followers and Ambassadors of Christ - did the same.

Traditional Values Coalition leader Lou Sheldon, a lead co-sponsor of MPW, wrote earlier this year:⁷

We are not tolerant of behaviors that destroy individuals, families and our culture. Individuals may be free to pursue such behaviors as sodomy, but we will not and cannot tolerate these behaviors... In short, we believe in intolerance to those things that are evil; and we believe that we should discriminate against those behaviors which are dangerous to individuals and to society.

Concerned Women for America recently warned that same-sex marriage “pose[s] a new threat to US border security” calling a legally married Canadian same-sex couple trying to enter the U.S. as a married couple “the latest pair of ‘domestic terrorists.’”⁸

Focus on the Family, the largest MPW co-sponsor, implies that having two gay fathers or two lesbian mothers makes children more susceptible to child abuse, a claim that is not supported by credible social science research or by most of the major medical and mental health professional organizations, including the American Psychiatric Association and the American Association of Pediatricians.⁹ An August 2003 briefing paper on same-sex marriage distributed by Focus on the Family states, “Same-sex parenting situations make it impossible for a child to live with both biological parents, thus increasing their risk of

⁶ Bennett, S. “Homosexual Agenda: The Deception and Desensitization of America’s Youth.” American Family Association website. http://www.afa.net/homosexual_agenda/getarticle.asp?id=81. Accessed October 8, 2003.

⁷ Sheldon, L. “Discrimination and Tolerance” Traditional Values Coalition Report. Volume 21, Number 1. February 2003.

⁸ Kimball, J. “Homosexuals Pose New Threat to U.S. Border Security.” Concerned Women for America.

⁹ Patterson, C.J. (1995). “Lesbian and gay parenting: a resource for psychologists.” Washington DC, APA.

abuse.”¹⁰ Thirty-four percent of lesbian couples and 22 percent of gay male couples reporting on the 2000 Census have at least one child under 18 years of age living in their home.¹¹ Children’s advocacy organizations and professional organizations recognize that most lesbian, gay and bisexual people make good parents, and that children can and do thrive in gay and lesbian families.¹²

Finding #2: The financial resources of the 13 organizations co-sponsoring “Marriage Protection Week” for which income data are available dwarf the resources of the top 13 national LGBT equal rights advocacy organizations by a margin of four to one (\$217 million compared to just \$54 million).

The co-sponsors of marriage week repeatedly claim that LGBT equal rights advocacy organizations are politically powerful, well-funded elites.¹³ For example, Traditional Values Coalition Executive Director Andrea Sheldon slammed President Clinton for speaking at a Human Rights Campaign dinner in 1997, denouncing “an American President kissing up to the wealthiest extremists of the left.”¹⁴ Ken Conner of the Family Research Council, a co-sponsor of Marriage Protection Week, wrote in a recent fundraising letter:¹⁵

The Human Rights Campaign and the other groups in the homosexual lobby have very deep pockets. Big corporations, elite foundations, and Hollywood celebrities underwrite the homosexual lobby with tens of millions of dollars every year.

¹⁰ Stanton, G. “Is Marriage in Jeopardy?” Focus on the Family, <http://family.org/cforum/fosi/marriage/FAQs/a0026916.cfm>. Accessed October 3, 2003.

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau (2003). *Married-Couple and Unmarried-Partner Households: 2000*. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-5.pdf>.

¹² According to American Academy of Pediatrics, Technical Report: *Co-parent or second parent adoption by same-sex parents*, February 2002, “A growing body of scientific literature demonstrates that children who grow up with 1 or 2 gay and/or lesbian parents fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual.”

¹³ See, for example, LaBarbera, P. (September 8, 2003). *Gay Journalists’ Conference Marked by Homosexual Activism*. Concerned Women for America; and Hastings, D., September 8, 2002), <http://home.christianity.com/local/77374.html>, First Baptists Church of Tonopah (linked to the Southern Baptist Convention website); and *Homosexuality: Where do We Stand and Why?* Citizens for Community Values, http://www.ccv.org/Homosexuality-Where_CCV_Stand.htm.

¹⁴ *Bay Windows*. (1997, November 27).

¹⁵ Conner, K. (2003, April 28). American Renewal. The Legislative Action Arm of the Family Research Council.

In fact, the resources available to the groups co-sponsoring MPW dwarf those of the largest national LGBT equal rights advocacy organizations. Income data were publicly accessible for 13 of the 29 co-sponsoring organizations. The most recent publicly available tax returns of those 13 organizations showed a combined income of almost \$217 million. These groups range from Focus on the Family, with

Table 1[^]

13 Sponsors of Marriage Protection Week For Which Income Data is Publicly Available

Focus on the Family	www.family.org	\$126,251,827
Prison Fellowship	www.pfm.org	46,310,285
American Family Association	www.afa.net	14,072,427
Concerned Women For America (CWA)	www.cwfa.org	11,999,881
Family Research Council	www.frc.org	9,730,169
Free Congress Foundation	www.freecongress.org	*2,680,004
Nat'l Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families	www.nationalcoalition.org	1,577,827
Eagle Forum	www.eagleforum.org	**1,569,697
Americans United for Life	www.unitedforlife.org	**1,118,102
American Values	www.ouramericanvalues.org	870,141
Traditional Values Coalition	www.traditionalvalues.org	**581,783
American Cause	www.theamericancause.org	**415,003
Citizens for Community Values	www.ccv.org	**89,388
	TOTAL	\$217,266,534

13 Largest National Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Advocacy Organizations

Human Rights Campaign/HRC Foundation	www.hrc.org	**\$17,334,997
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.	www.lambdalegal.org	9,509,686
Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Inc.	www.glaad.org	5,300,000
National Gay & Lesbian Task Force/NGLTF Foundation	www.nglhf.org	***5,121,163
Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network	www.glsen.org	3,325,203
LLEGO (National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization)	www.llego.org	2,500,000
Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gay Men	www.pflag.org	**2,363,005
Victory Fund/Foundation	www.victoryfund.org	2,000,000
Servicemembers Legal Defense Network	www.sldn.org	1,800,000
National Center for Lesbian Rights	www.nclrights.org	**1,414,120
International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission	www.iglhrc.org	1,357,355
Freedom to Marry	www.freedomtomarry.org	****\$1,100,000
National Youth Advocacy Coalition	www.nyacyouth.org	1,021,907
	TOTAL	\$54,147,436

[^]Information retrieved from Guidestar.org (IRS 990 forms), unless otherwise noted.

*2000 Revenues

**2001 Revenues

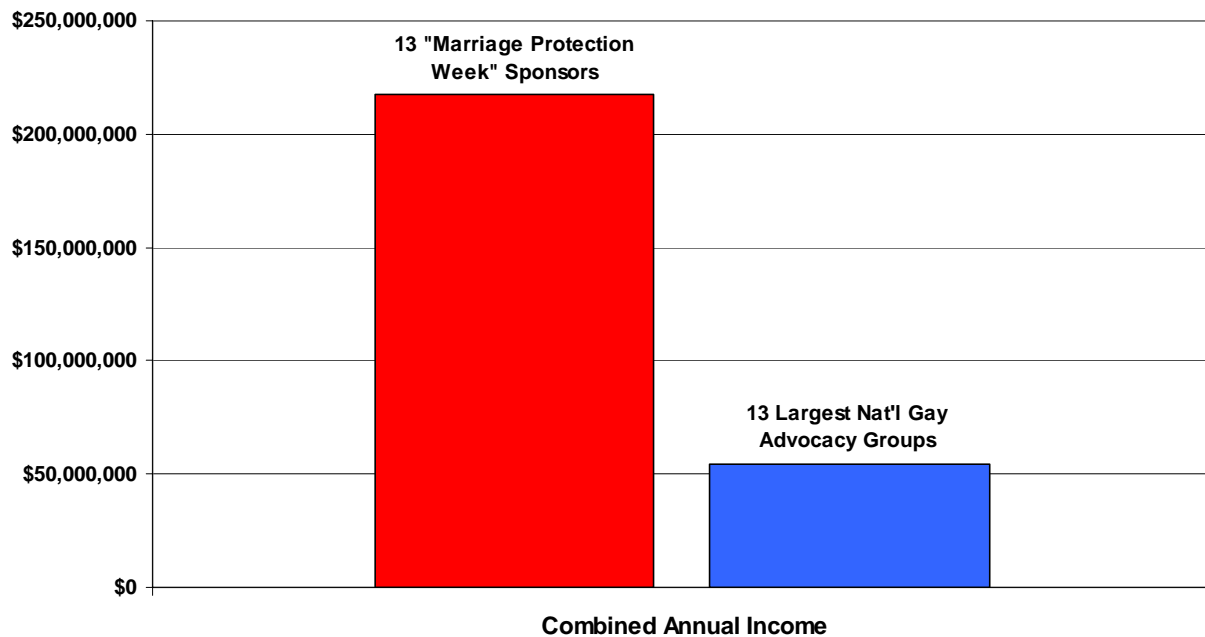
***FY2002-03 Audited Financial Statement

****2003 Approved Budget

\$126 million in revenue in 2002, to Citizens for Community Values, with \$89,000 in income in 2002. In comparison, the 13 *largest* national gay political organizations reported a combined income of \$54 million in 2002.

It should be noted that some of the 16 MPW sponsors for which income data were not available have enormous resources and clout.¹⁶ For example, Bott Broadcasting owns at least 28 radio stations, and Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission reaches the 42,000 congregations within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Figure 2: Annual Income Analysis



¹⁶ Financial information on these organizations was obtained from Guidestar.com, which posts the IRS Form 990's (or 990EZ) for non-profit organizations that may accept tax-deductible contributions. In turn, this information comes from the IRS Business Master File of 501(c) nonprofits. 501(c)(3) organizations with \$25,000 or more in annual revenue are required to file "990's" with the IRS. We were not able to obtain financial data on 16 of the 29 organizations co-sponsoring "Marriage Protection Week." There are a number of possible reasons: (a) some of the sponsoring organizations are not 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations eligible to accept tax-deductible contributions (religious organizations, for-profits, such as Bott Broadcasting, and political advocacy 501(c)(4) organizations are not required to file 990's; (b) the organization may be registered under a different name with the IRS; (c) the organization may be the program of a larger organization; (d) the organization may have lost its 501(c)(3) status; and (e) the organization may have been recently formed.

Finding #3: There is no focus whatsoever in the mission or planned activities of MPW on activities that would help to build strong and healthy marriages and families.

On October 3, 2003, President Bush issued an official proclamation in support of Marriage Protection Week, stating:¹⁷

Marriage is a sacred institution, and its protection is essential to the continued strength of our society. Marriage Protection Week provides an opportunity to focus our efforts on preserving the sanctity of marriage and on building strong and healthy marriages in America.

Despite the President's statement, a review of the purpose and planned activities of "Marriage Protection Week" shows there is no focus at all on efforts to build strong and healthy marriages in America, or to protect them from real and documented threats like poverty and lack of access to affordable health care. Instead, the purpose of the week is to confront LGBT families who seek to "redefine marriage."¹⁸

The sacred institution of marriage is under attack. There are those who want to redefine marriage to include two men, or two women, or a group of any size or mix of sexes: One man and four women, one woman and two men, etc. If they fail to secure legal protection classifying these arrangements as "marriage," they want to include all these mixtures under the definition of "civil union," giving them identical standing with the marriage of one man and one woman.

To accomplish this purpose, those participating in the week are encouraged to take several actions through church-related and political activities designed to pressure elected officials into sponsoring the Federal Marriage Amendment.¹⁹ The encouraged church-related activities include a rally on Sunday, October 12, asking pastors to preach on marriage, and the distribution of information in churches. All of the accompanying materials, including sermon preparation documents, a suggested proclamation, and fact sheets, focus exclusively on the alleged and unsubstantiated threat of gay marriage, not on any of the other factors affecting family life and the institution of marriage.

¹⁷ Marriage Protection Week, 2003. (2003, October 3). Retrieved from www.marriageprotectionweek.com., October 10, 2003.

¹⁸ Purpose of marriage protection week. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/purpose.asp>

¹⁹ Take action. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/action.asp>

Neither of the model sermons suggested by MPW organizers contains one sentence to help couples sustain their marriages. Instead, each is focused exclusively on homosexuality and same-sex marriage and uses inflammatory speech about gay people.

One of sermons, by Rev. Ed Vitagliano, calls homosexuality “an inverted, perverted love,” and “a form of idolatry, whereby God is exchanged for the temporal and carnal pleasures of this life.” Homosexuality is portrayed as “mere self-centered sensual enjoyment of the sexual faculties...in which one worships an image of oneself through same-sex copulation.” This “failed worship” is “beneath all the maladies of the world” and “all of man’s wretchedness (flows) from this profound disordering of life.”²⁰

In the second sermon, Rev. Ronnie Floyd claims that gay people “have declared war against our culture” and portrays homosexuality as a fate worse than the death of a child. Floyd quotes a parishioner who tells him, “Pastor Floyd, it would have been easier to have lost my child to death than to homosexuality. It is killing me.” Floyd warns:²¹

Satan has taken his tool of homosexuality, a gross and evil sin, and done a con job on the American culture, making it seem like all is okay when you are gay...what was once subtle has now turned into the rage of a lion as brazen and threatening as anything in our culture.

Similarly, the “mini-poster” and “pass along sheet” have an exclusive focus on same-sex marriage, to the exclusion of any other marriage-related issues. In addition, both documents go beyond the issue of marriage and attack civil unions.^{22,23}

The sacred institution of marriage is under attack. Homosexual activists have made great progress toward redefining marriage to include two men, or two women, or a group of any size or mix of sexes: If they fail to get the legal right to “marry,” they will seek the same privileges and approval of society by calling their arrangements “civil unions.”

²⁰ Vitagliano, E. *One flesh: Why sodomy can never depict the relationship between Christ and His church*. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/one_flesh.html

²¹ Floyd, R. (2003, September 19). *First person: A biblical response to unholy gay ‘matrimony’*. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?Id=16715>.

²² Marriage protection week October 12-18. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/mpw_miniposter.pdf

²³ Marriage protection week October 12-18. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/mpw_flyer.pdf

The national media, Hollywood and many politicians are behind their efforts. Their success will mean that 97% of Americans will be forced to bow to the desires of the approximately 3% who are homosexuals.

In addition to church-related work, participants of MPW are asked to:²⁴

- (a) call, write and/or e-mail your Representative and your two U.S. Senators. Demand that they support the Federal Marriage Amendment; and
- (b) encourage your city's mayor, or even your state's governor, to issue a proclamation endorsing Marriage Protection Week

Clearly this event is designed primarily to motivate voters to take political action and support the Federal Marriage Amendment, which has no other purpose than to deny equal civil marriage rights for gay and lesbian people and to preclude courts from interpreting any federal or state laws or constitutions to extend any recognition or benefits to same-sex couples. Additionally, the message MPW participants are asked to send to their elected officials is strikingly similar to President George W. Bush's proclamation. It speaks in high-minded language about the value of marriage in our society and seeks to have elected officials proclaim support for the week without ever citing the actual focus of the week: To "affirm the belief that the uniting of persons in a civil union, domestic partnership or similar relationship shall not be valid or recognized with any legal benefits or privileges in the United States."²⁵

²⁴ Take Action. Retrieved October 10, 2003 from <http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/action.asp>

²⁵ Fancher, B., & Parker, P. (2003, October 13). Pro-family leaders speak up as 'marriage protection week' kicks off. AgapePress. Retrieved October 13, 2003 from <http://headlines.agapepress.org/printerver.asp>.

Sponsors of Marriage Protection Week

Name	Website
American Association of Christian Schools	www.aacs.org
American Cause	www.theamericancause.org
American Family Association	www.afa.net
Americans United for Life	www.unitedforlife.org
American Values	www.ouramericanvalues.org
Bott Broadcasting	www.bottradionetwork.com
Christian Coalition	www.cc.org
Citizens for Community Values	www.ccv.org
Concerned Women For America (CWA)	www.cwfa.org
Eagle Forum	www.eagleforum.org
Empower America	www.empoweramerica.org
Faith2Action	www.f2a.org
Family Research Council	www.frc.org
Focus on the Family	www.family.org
Free Congress Foundation	www.freecongress.org
Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA)	www.hslda.org
INSP Broadcasting (The Inspiration Network)	www.insp.com
National Religious Broadcasters	www.nrb.org
National Coalition for the Protection of Children & Families (NCPCF)	www.nationalcoalition.org
Prison Fellowship	www.pfm.org
Religious Freedom Coalition	www.rfcnet.org
Restoration Sanctuary International Church	www.restorationchurchatlanta.com
Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission	www.forfaithandfamily.com
Traditional Values Coalition	www.traditionalvalues.org
Truth in Love Outreach	
University of the Family	www.marriage.org
USA Radio Network	www.usaradio.com
World Magazine	www.worldmag.com

Sources: <http://www.marriageprotectionweek.com/> and <http://www.cwfa.org/articles/4664/MEDIA/family/index.htm>. Accessed on October 8, 2003