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Let the people define marriage

Mark Johnson / Guest Columnist

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It was our first big argument. I was a boy of 20 from rural Illinois. She was slightly older and from West Virginia. When I didn't pledge allegiance to the West Virginia flag, she made it clear that Mountaineers were very loyal to their state and she didn't appreciate my disrespect.

We have now been married for 31 years, living in this wonderful state for 21 of them. I have apologized for not saying the pledge.

I love West Virginia. Among its strengths is our love of family. Unfortunately, the redefinition of marriage in West Virginia is closer than many think.

While we have a Defense of Marriage Act, activist judges can - and have - struck down such laws, as in Massachusetts, Connecticut and California. That is why 30 states have now put the definition of marriage - between one man and one woman - into their constitutions.

Some say that same-sex "marriage" never could come to the Mountain State. But, it would be easy for opponents of marriage to launch West Virginia into legal chaos and redefine marriage here. An adoption case concerning a same-sex couple already is in our courts.

Radical homosexual advocates easily could petition to have their "marriage" from another state recognized in West Virginia.

What is a pastor, like me, to do if I and my church are sued for refusing to perform a ceremony for two men? In this way, even religious freedom is at stake.

Same-sex "marriage" threatens the institution of marriage by attacking its time-tested, historically effective definition as between one man and one woman. Tamper with that definition and our children or grandchildren will face tough consequences.

Children do best when raised by a mom and a dad. Circumstances may deprive a child of one or the other, but to intentionally deprive children of a mom or dad is unwise.

Our Legislature should allow us to vote on a Marriage Protection Amendment. Let the people of West Virginia define marriage in West Virginia.

In a recent poll, 73 percent of West Virginians stated they support a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman. (See www.wvformarriage.com)

If West Virginians do not shut the door on same-sex "marriage" today, to do so in the future will become much more difficult.

And expensive. Hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been spent by state governments litigating the definition of marriage, only to end up having to define it democratically anyway. Let's avoid that unnecessary expense.

A Marriage Protection Amendment would protect the definition of marriage from activist judges. This is a moral and spiritual issue affecting the churches, families and children of West Virginia.

Hundreds of pastors from around West Virginia have asked Gov. Joe Manchin and our Legislature to let our people vote to define marriage in our state.

You should, too. Encourage your legislators to support a Marriage Protection Amendment during this legislative session.

- Mark Johnson lives in Martinsburg, where he has served as senior pastor-teacher at Independent Bible Church for the past 21 years. He can be reached at pastormark@lbcwv.org

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