



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on March 17, 2013

Republican Senator Rob Portman Makes Stunning Flip on Same-sex Marriage

U.S. Senator Rob Portman (R-Ohio), one of the sponsors of the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and a vocal opponent of same-sex marriage, [announced March 14](#) that he has changed his position and now supports the legalization of same-sex marriage. The Ohio Republican told reporters that the change came after his son Will informed him and his wife, Jane, that he is homosexual. Portman's change comes just a week before the U.S. Supreme Court hears oral arguments in a series of lawsuits filed by pro-homosexual groups to overturn the 1996 DOMA law as unconstitutional.



Portman (shown) told reporters that his new-found support for same-sex marriage represents a “change in my position that I have had in Congress and also here in the Senate the last couple of years.” He added that the change “came about through a process” after his son’s 2011 revelation. That revelation “allowed me to think about this issue from a new perspective ... as a dad who loves his son a lot and wants him to have the same opportunities that his brother and sister have.”

In a follow-up personal piece published in the Columbus, Ohio, [Dispatch](#) newspaper, Portman wrote: “I have come to believe that if two people are prepared to make a lifetime commitment to love and care for each other in good times and in bad, the government shouldn’t deny them the opportunity to get married.”

Portman admitted that he had wrestled with how he could reconcile same-sex marriage with his Christian faith, but ultimately “it came down to the Bible’s overarching themes of love and compassion and my belief that we are all children of God.” He added that “well-intentioned people can disagree on the question of marriage for gay couples, and maintaining religious freedom is as important as pursuing civil marriage rights. For example, I believe that no law should force religious institutions to perform weddings or recognize marriages they don’t approve of.”

But he also claimed that allowing homosexuals to marry is, at heart, founded on conservative principles. “We conservatives believe in personal liberty and minimal government interference in people’s lives,” he pointed out. “We also consider the family unit to be the fundamental building block of society. We should encourage people to make long-term commitments to each other and build families, so as to foster strong, stable communities and promote personal responsibility.”

In an effort to assuage the bitterness his conservative colleagues and constituents were feeling over his change, the junior Ohio senator offered: “One way to look at it is that gay couples’ desire to marry doesn’t amount to a threat but rather a tribute to marriage, and a potential source of renewed strength for the institution.”

Portman concluded that “I’ve thought a great deal about this issue, and like millions of Americans in



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recent years, I've changed my mind on the question of marriage for same-sex couples. As we strive as a nation to form a more perfect union, I believe all of our sons and daughters ought to have the same opportunity to experience the joy and stability of marriage."

While Portman is just now making the revelation public, news reports noted that during the last presidential campaign Mitt Romney had taken a hard look at Portman as a running mate, but quickly backed away when the senator informed him that his son was homosexual.

The Columbus *Dispatch* reported that before making his announcement "Portman said he spoke with the pastor of his church in Cincinnati and opponents of gay marriage about his change in position. In addition, last weekend, he spoke with former Vice President Dick Cheney, whose daughter Mary is gay. 'His advice was: "Do the right thing. Follow your heart,'" Portman said."

Applause for Portman's announcement came quickly from homosexual groups, beginning with the Log Cabin Republicans, a small group of homosexuals in Portman's own party. The group's executive director, Gregory Angelo, said in a statement that "if there was any doubt that the conservative logjam on the issue of civil marriage for committed gay and lesbian couples has broken, Senator Portman's support for the freedom to marry has erased it."

Similarly, Chad Griffin of the radical pro-homosexual Human Rights Campaign applauded Portman for making "the basic and courageous choice to put parenting before politics.... When it comes to marriage equality, all Americans are on the same journey toward recognizing our common humanity. But while eight in ten Americans know a gay or lesbian person, it still takes unique courage to speak out publicly for equality."

Predictably, pro-family groups were mostly gracious toward Portman, but were adamant that he was wrong on changing his position because of his son's homosexuality. Tony Perkins of the [Family Research Council](#) commended Portman for his unconditional love toward his son. "Regardless of a child's choices, the love of a parent can and should be a guiding beacon in the lives of their sons and daughters," said Perkins. However, he added, such love "does not mean unconditional support in choices that are both harmful to them and society as a whole.... Our unconditional love for our children should not override the historical and social science evidence which makes abundantly clear what is best for all children and for society — being raised by a married mother and father."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, told [Baptist Press News](#) that like Portman, had one of his children announced that he was homosexual, he and his wife would continue to love that child. But, he emphasized, he would also have made it clear "that their mother and I disagree with their lifestyle preference and did not approve it, and the Bible doesn't approve it."

As for Portman's use of Scripture to support his new-found support for same-sex marriage, Land pointed out that the Bible "does not condone a homosexual lifestyle, either in a committed relationship or in an uncommitted one." He added that "the Christian faith, for over 2,000 years now, has said that the overarching theme of love and compassion tells homosexuals the truth, and that is that God does not condone or accept homosexual behavior. That is quite clear in the New Testament, as well as the Old."

On the same day that Portman made his announcement, the [Heritage Foundation's](#) Jim DeMint told the 2013 Conservative Political Action Conference that conservative leaders "cannot hope to limit government if we do not stand up for our core civil society institutions, beginning with marriage."



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DeMint said that marriage “is the foundation of America’s cultural stability and economic prosperity and the courts have no business overruling the people’s democratic decisions in the states. People can love whom they want and live the way they choose, but no one is entitled to redefine a foundational institution of civil society that has existed for centuries.”

The FRC’s Tony Perkins predicted that as the debate continues he believed “most states will continue to conclude that marriage exists to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife to be father and mother to any children their union produces. Marriage is rooted in the reality that children need a mother and a father.”

Photo of Sen. Rob Portman: AP Images



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