



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 13, 2012

U.K. to Move Ahead With Legalizing Same-sex Marriage

Under a proposal planned for early next year in the U.K., same-sex marriage will be legalized throughout Great Britain, but the Church of England and the [Church in Wales](#) would supposedly be protected from having to perform such “marriage” ceremonies. Following a nationwide “consultation” that found a slim majority of the British citizenry supported the move, the U.K.’s culture secretary, Maria Miller, announced December 11 that legislation would be introduced into Parliament to redefine marriage to include homosexual couples.



In a [news release](#) Miller’s office explained that the legislative proposal would be designed to “create watertight protections for religious organizations that do not want to conduct same-sex marriages, but will allow them to ‘opt in’ if they so choose.”

The release added that the “historic move” would mean “same-sex couples will be able to get married in civil ceremonies; religious organizations who chose to ‘opt in’ will be able to conduct marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples; and a ‘quadruple lock’ of measures in domestic legislation would protect religious freedom, putting beyond doubt the possibility of successful challenge through domestic or European courts.”

In a statement Miller called marriage “one of the most important institutions we have in this country. It binds us together, brings long-term commitment and stability, and makes society stronger. Our proposals mean that marriage would be available to everyone. I feel strongly that, if a couple wish to show their love and commitment to each other, the state should not stand in their way. These changes will strengthen marriage in our society and ensure that it remains a modern and vibrant tradition. And we are also building a fairer society for all.”

She emphasized that it was “absolutely clear” in the proposal that no religious organization will ever be forced to conduct marriages for same-sex couples.... European law already puts religious freedom beyond doubt, and we will go even further by bringing in an additional ‘quadruple legal lock’. But, it is also a key aspect of religious freedom that those bodies who want to opt-in should be able to do so.”

Notwithstanding such assurances, some have expressed their concerns about possible legal repercussions, with Conservative lawmaker Dominic Raab, saying: “I am concerned, and constituents and local clergy have also expressed the concern that, by redefining marriage, we may expose churches and other religious institutions to legal challenge and force them to marry gay couples under the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.”

Prime Minister David Cameron has been at the forefront of the push for legalizing same-sex marriage, and in response to some members of his own Conservative Party who oppose the move, remarked that “marriage is a great institution, so why close it off to people who happen to be gay?” In a condescending statement targeting those with grave reservations about the move, Cameron said that “we just have to be grown up and accept that in a modern political party sometimes you will have issues



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of conscience where people will vote in different ways.”

A number of Members of Parliament (MP) within Cameron’s own party have voiced their displeasure over the aggressive push for same-sex marriage, with one, Steward Jackson, telling fellow MPs that the move is “a constitutional outrage and a disgrace.” Another Conservative MP, Peter Bone, said that “I am a Christian and I do not believe in the redefinition of marriage. Millions of people across the country take that view as well.”

Conservative MP David Burrowes said that he had spoken to others within Cameron’s party and “a majority are against this particular change. These proposals raise many more questions than they answer. The so-called protections will not be sufficient.” He added that a redefinition of marriage “is not just about the freedom of churches to administer gay weddings. It is about the freedom of public sector workers and others to exercise their liberty of conscience. It has opened a can of worms.”

The Church of England, which has maintained a solid opposition to legalizing same-sex marriage, predicted that “redefining marriage to include same-sex relationships will entail a dilution in the meaning of marriage for everyone by excluding the fundamental complementarity of men and women from the social and legal definition of marriage.”

The [Guardian](#) newspaper noted that while Anglicans and other conservative U.K. denominations oppose the measure, other religious groups, “including the Quakers, Unitarians and liberal Judaism, support marriage rights for gay couples and have said they would like to conduct the ceremonies.” The [Guardian](#) quoted a spokesman for Britain’s Quaker church as saying that “Quakers have been discussing sexuality for 50 years and in 2009 that led us to seek a change in the law so that all marriages in Quaker meeting houses, of whatever sex, can be prepared, celebrated, witnessed, reported to the state, and recognized as legally valid, without further process. We are waiting for the law to catch up. For Quakers, this is an issue of religious freedom and we don’t seek to impose this on others.”

Other Christian groups within the nation argued that the move to normalize homosexual marriage has been little more than a political campaign. “The decision to ignore a petition of half a million people [who oppose same-sex marriage] is disgraceful and undemocratic and goes against assurances from civil servants that all submissions would be treated equally and fairly,” said Colin Hart, a spokesman for a traditional marriage group in the U.K. called [Coalition for Marriage](#). He added that not only was the consultation “loaded in favor of ripping up the centuries-old definition of marriage, but it lacked even the most basic of safeguards to check the identity of those taking part.”

David Landrum, director of the U.K.’s [Evangelical Alliance](#), said that “from the very outset, this proposal has been characterized far more by politics than by principles. Although the sky won’t fall in if the law changes, there will most certainly be a new legal culture imposed that over time will have profound and incalculable consequences for family life and social relations in the UK.”

He said that “in light of the momentous nature of what is being proposed for our social constitution, it is not unreasonable to demand a national referendum. The people deserve to have their say on this issue.”



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