



New DLC Chairman Worries Homosexuals

January 26, 2007

By Nathan Burchfiel

CNSNews.com Staff Writer

Former Congressman Harold Ford on Thursday became the new head of the Democratic Leadership Council - a move that worries some homosexual Democrats, because Ford voted for an amendment to define marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

In November, Ford ran an unsuccessful campaign to fill the seat vacated by the retiring Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. He will now succeed Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack as chairman of the moderate Democratic group. Vilsack is resigning to focus on his bid for the 2008 presidential nomination.

The National Stonewall Democrats, a group of homosexual Democrats, has voiced concern over Ford, saying he "possesses a poor record on issues that impact LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] families."

"Congressman Harold Ford has demonstrated a lack of leadership and judgment on family issues that causes our members great concern," NSD Executive Director Joanne Wyrick said in a statement before Ford's election.

"His willingness to lightly amend the U.S. Constitution and to exploit gay families for political gain should alarm Democrats across the country," she said.

"Conservative, centrist and progressive Democrats agree that those who support such a constitutional amendment threaten the stability of thousands of American homes," Wyrick said.

In July, Ford was one of 34 House Democrats to vote in favor of a constitutional amendment that would have defined marriage as being between a man and a woman. The measure failed to garner the two-thirds majority required for passage.

John Marble, a spokesman for the NSD, told Cybercast News Service the group is asking the DLC to clarify its position on the marriage amendment.

"We are looking for the DLC to affirm their opposition to such amendments and hopefully for Harold Ford as chair to also affirm those opinions," Marble said, classifying the DLC's past opposition to the amendment as "fairly passive."

The DLC in 2004 was critical of Bush's attempts to make the amendment a focus of his re-election campaign, saying that politicians who opposed it - like the Democratic candidate, Sen. John Kerry - "better reflect the views of most Americans."

"We're not asking him to change his stance on same-sex marriage itself," Marble said, "it's just constitutional amendments that not only bar that but also bar things like domestic partnerships and civil unions."

Roberta Sklar, a spokeswoman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, told Cybercast News Service that her group "stands with the National Stonewall Democrats in calling upon the Democratic Leadership Council to affirm their opposition to anti-gay marriage amendments."

The DLC did not respond to requests for comment Friday.