

from our viewpoint...

Family amendment gets Bush out of fray

It was an astute move President Bush made last week announcing that he felt Congress should pass a constitutional amendment to “save the family” as a union between a man and a woman.

The country has been buzzing with the debate about same-sex marriages, and the focal points are in Massachusetts and California.

The Massachusetts Legislature recessed a special constitutional assembly because it was not able to agree on the language of a state amendment to prohibit same-sex marriage. The assembly will be back in session in the summer to see if the members can reach an agreement.

In San Francisco, the county clerk has been banned from giving out any more marriage licenses to same-sex couples and there is a move to annul marriages of all those who were hitched in the past couple of weeks. The marriages continue to be performed.

With this as his backdrop, President Bush stepped up and called for a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as being between a man and a woman.

With a single stroke, Bush defused and deflected a topic which could be disastrous to his re-election campaign and divisive to his party. He simply gave his opinion and said it was up to Congress to make the next move.

No matter what Bush is asked in the next nine months about the question, all he has to do is say, “I have said I would support an amendment to the Constitution on that subject.”

With the pressure from traditionalists, bills to create the amendment and begin the process have been introduced in Congress. They may move quickly in an election year.

However, getting the amendment through Congress is just the first step. To become a part of the Constitution, an amendment requires ratification by 38 states.

As the supporters of the Equal Rights Amendment found out, getting through the ratification process is not quick or easy. The amendment guaranteeing equal rights for women, first proposed in 1923, is still not part of the Constitution.

The amendment has been ratified by 35 of the needed 38 states. If three more states vote yes, it might become the 28th Amendment.

Supporters of the amendment — between 1972 and 1982 — lobbied, marched, rallied, petitioned, picketed, went on hunger strikes and committed civil disobedience in the long historical continuum of women’s struggle for constitutional equality.

Alice Paul believed an amendment affirming equal application of the Constitution to all citizens was required despite the 19th Amendment which gave women the right to vote. That amendment was ratified in 1920. In 1923, at the 75th anniversary of the 1848 Woman’s Rights Convention, Paul introduced the “Lucretia Mott Amendment,” which read: “Men and women shall have equal rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction.” The amendment was introduced in every session of Congress until it passed in 1972. Congress attached a nine-year deadline which was extended to 1982. In 1977, Indiana became the 35th and to date the last state to ratify the amendment.

The deadline appeared to be the end, but the ratification in 1992 of the “Madison Amendment,” concerning changes in Congressional pay which was passed by Congress in 1789 — 203 years before — leads some legal scholars to believe the Equal Rights Amendment may have life despite the deadline.

Bush’s call for the family amendment is politically expedient in this election year, but it is a long way from being added to the Constitution. — *Tom Betz*

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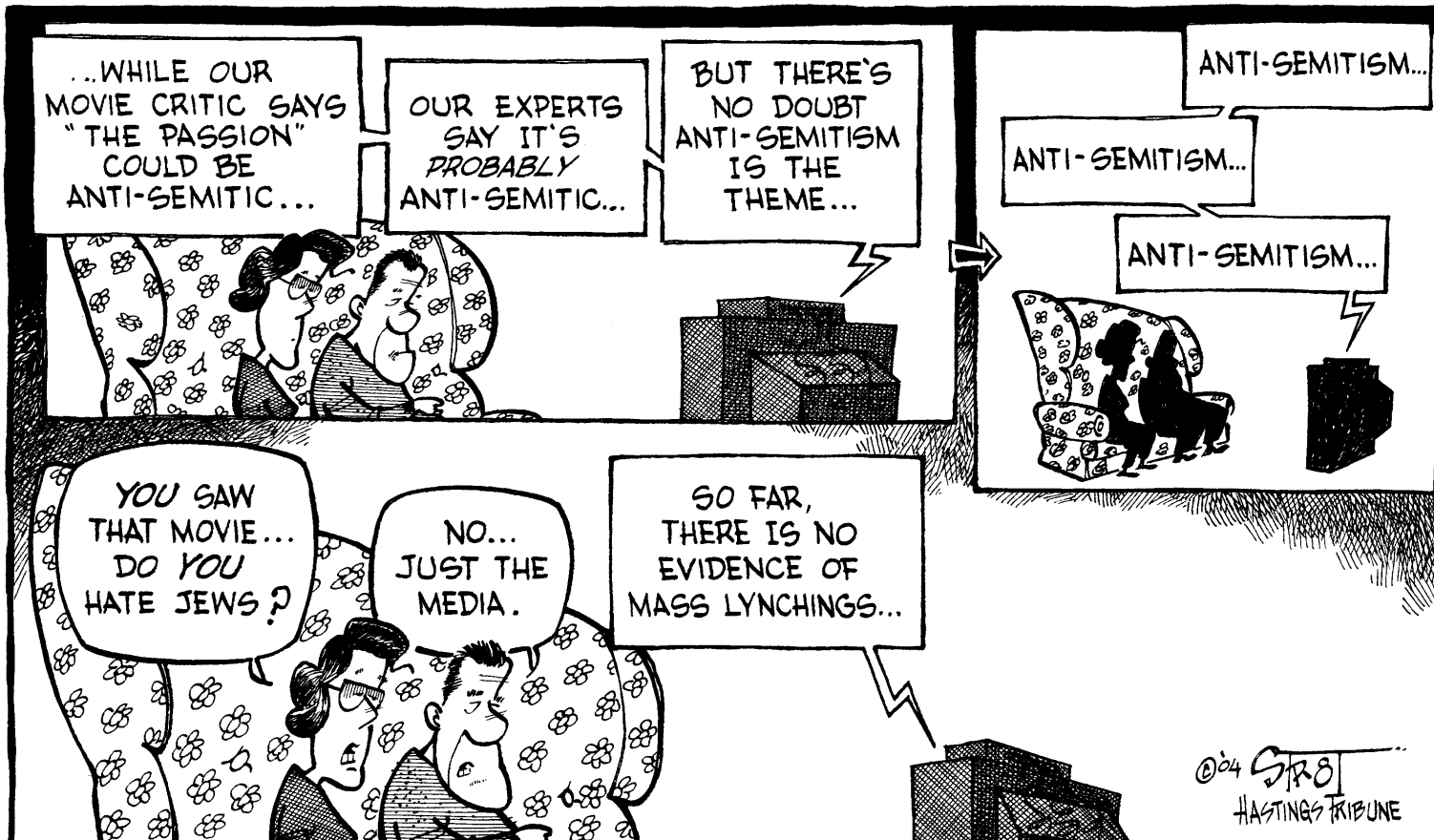
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It is a mess living through redecorating

My home is a wreck. It wasn’t this big of a mess when I had three children at home.

After refinancing the house last year, we decided to do a little redecorating. We’ve lived here for 10 years and have only painted one room — actually the children painted it and it’s a lovely blue.

The rest of the house, however, needed an overhaul, and with 10 years of equity and a lower interest rate, we were able to talk the bank into some remodeling money.

We are in the process of painting three bedrooms, a sitting room, the living room, the dining room and two bathrooms. We’ve also decided to do the kitchen but not until everything else is done. We will be recarpeting three rooms and two stairways.

The painters have been in and out for the last two weeks. They have finished our bedroom and it is in pretty good shape. I was worried that we wouldn’t be able to sleep there for the two nights that it was being done, but the fumes were minimal and it hasn’t been too bad.

The rest of the house is a different matter. We couldn’t use the downstairs bathroom for two days and that drove me crazy both because that’s where the tub is — upstairs we have a shower — and because like a little child, I’m used to rush-



cynthia haynes

• open season

ing in the back door at the last minute and now I had to run all the way upstairs.

While our bedroom is usable, the other three are not, that includes the one the kids painted last year. Two of the bedrooms are full of furniture that belongs somewhere else and the third is the repository of all the painter’s equipment.

The sitting room is getting back into shape, but I still can’t find half my stuff and there is a two-wheeler sitting under one edge of the couch. That worries me a little.

The living and dining rooms are total disasters. Please, please don’t visit me. The only way to get through the house is to walk sideways.

The dining room table is sitting in the middle of the living room and the china cabinet and cedar chest are in the middle of the dining room. Everything had to be moved to the center of the room so the painters could work.

At the same time we’ve had electricians put-

ting up a new light fixture in the dining room. At the moment the old fixture is stored in the basement and the dining room ceiling has a bare bulb. The new fixture will have a ceiling fan and that requires more work than just pulling one thing down and shoving another up. Still, I’m not complaining. The single 100-watt bulb gives more light than the ornate antique fixture that was just removed. It had five sockets and none of them worked.

To add to the mess, we had wallpaper in both bathrooms and the dining room that had to be removed. There are little bits and pieces of it everywhere. I’m sure the cats are responsible for a good deal of the mess, but the house looks like there has been a confetti war and it lost.

I can’t wait for the painting to be done. Then the crew will come in and pull up all the carpeting. Even the room the kids painted needs new carpet. All those things stored in there and in the other bedrooms will have to be moved — not to where they belong — that area is still under construction — but somewhere, probably my bedroom.

I know everything will look great when the painting and carpeting is done and we have a new light fixture. Then everything will go back in its place and we’ll be back to our normal messiness instead of this super-duper mess.

A thank you for helping with tax filing

To the Editor:
 This is a thank you to the American Association of Retired Person’s tax help people. What a great service!
 Four of them worked on one case for year 2002 to such a point it was almost to tears, for real. It was a tough one.

They help folks each Friday until almost April 15 at Senior Center or the library. They are as fast as they are good. Good as they are fast.

A wonderful service they offer to many.
 Jaunita Garner



from our readers

• to the editor

Goodland

I enjoyed attending the 60th anniversary annual meeting of the Sherman County Conservation District last Monday evening at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. The meal served

Remembering growing up with Harry

Harry Higgins’ daughters asked for recollections and stories about their father for his funeral. I couldn’t think of one single story that would tell you about Harry, which is odd, because I’ve known him all my life.

Where do I start?

Harry and his wife Betty were part of a circle of friends who lived their lives, raised their children and enjoyed each other’s company in Emporia, in eastern Kansas.

Harry decided he wasn’t getting enough from dialysis treatments to make it worth the pain and suffering. He told the doctor he was going home and having a shot of scotch.

That was Harry. He loved his scotch, and he knew when to fold.

I’m sure it wasn’t an easy decision. Betty had a stroke several years ago and is in a nursing home. I know he hated to leave her. They’d been together since before the war, 64 years.

The last day, he waited until the girls could bring their mom up to see him before he let go. Everyone figured he just wanted to say good-bye.

My folks were part of that social group. Their lives and their families were intertwined over the years in a unique bond that almost defies description. They all led middle-class lives, striving for the American dream in that GI-bill



steve haynes

• along the sappa

era after World War II. They thought they could raise their kids well in a small Kansas town.

Harry and Betty had come down from Kansas City, Kansas, as my folks had. Harry was a salesman, my dad a lawyer. There was Lamar and Zelma Dee Markowitz; Lamar profane and funny, a contractor who built a good business but always talked like a ditch digger. Bob and Lucy Foncannon rounded out the group; he was a banker.

None of the wives, in those 1950s-Leave-It-to-Beaver, days, had an regular outside job. They thought raising kids and keeping house was work enough.

The group wasn’t constantly together. I don’t remember many times when all four couples were in one place, and there were others who came and went. But we were always at somebody’s house to visit in the evening. The adults would have highballs. The kids went to play.

There were other couples who joined, but

by the ladies was good.

The tradition of sound soil and water conservation practices have been carried out by the farmer district board and the Natural Resources Conservation Service staff, formerly the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Many awards were given out both to children, news media and farmers in the county. Congratulations.

Lawrence Tedford
 Goodland
 District Conservationist, 1951-1981

those four were eternal. My brother said the thing he remembered was when they got together, they were having fun. There wasn’t a jerk in the bunch. They were all nice people, honest, hard-working, successful. Their children turned out the same way.

They were good couples. There was never a divorce. If there was infidelity, it must have been awfully discreet.

As the years went by, three of the four couples bought cabins at the city lake, and the social life shifted out there. It was a great place to be, but as pre-teens, we hated the isolation.

There are times when I’d give anything to go back to those simple days, though.

Harry was the successful sales manager of a successful local firm. Then the company changed and they bought him out. That was hard, but as things turned out, maybe for the best. He and Betty lived well in their retirement as they watched the others die off one by one.

That era is pretty much gone. Rare is the marriage where both partners don’t work. There may be people who form that kind of life-long bond, but the way we move around today, I think it’s harder. More of us live in cities, and the social structure is different.

That was a time. That was a gang. I miss them.

garfield

