

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2004

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Thank you for writing to me to express your views concerning the Federal Marriage Amendment, or HJ Res 56. Equality, fairness, and freedom from discrimination are fundamental components of the Constitution, and I am dedicated to promoting fair and equal treatment for all Americans. This includes supporting equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans, including their decision and right to marry under civil law.

The proposed constitutional amendment to limit marriage to unions between one man and one woman threatens to prevent same-sex couples from ever gaining equal access to the institution of marriage. The "Federal Marriage Amendment" reads: "Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman. Neither this Constitution, nor the Constitution of any State, nor State or Federal law, shall be construed to require that marital status or the legal incidents thereof be conferred upon unmarried couples or groups."

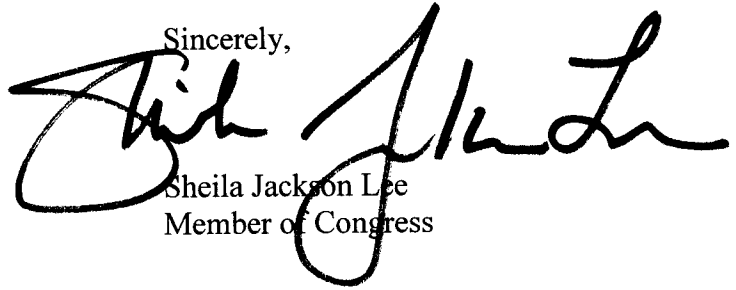
In practice, this amendment would prevent any state from extending equal marriage rights to same-sex couples and could possibly invalidate domestic partner and civil union laws that provide some measure of protection to same-sex couples and their families.

I oppose passage of the Federal Marriage Amendment. Not only would it unfairly exclude gay and lesbian couples from the institution of marriage – and the more than 1,000 federal rights, protections, and responsibilities that come with it – but it would also undermine the integrity of our cherished Constitution by writing discrimination into it for the first time.

This bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee, of which I am a member. I will continue to voice my opposition to this bill when it comes before the entire committee, and anticipate voting against it when it comes before the full House of Representatives.

Thank you very much for your thoughts and opinions on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sheila Jackson Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "J".

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

SJL:mm