The Sense in Being a Conservative Supporter of Gay Marriage

Earlier this week, commentator Meghan McCain (daughter of U.S. Senator John McCain) received a lot of online attention after expressing her thoughts on Mark Sanford's special-election victory over opponent Elizabeth Colbert Busch.

In reaction to Sanford's recapturing of his old seat in Congress, McCain tweeted: "Any Republican that voted for Mark Sanford in South Carolina but is against gay marriage is an unbelievable hypocrite."

I know her reasoning is a bit tough to follow, so I'll explain it: McCain is an outspoken supporter of gay marriage. Her implication was that people who oppose gay marriage (on the grounds that it defies the *sanctity of marriage*) are hypocrites for voting for someone who cheated on his wife (because there is no clearer violation of that sanctity than infidelity).

Conservatives had a lot of fun tormenting McCain over her statement. Many quickly and correctly pointed out (albeit in highly sarcastic terms) that her logic would *only* make sense if applied to *single-issue* voters whose single-issue was their opposition to gay marriage on the grounds of protecting traditional marriage.

Now, there *might* be a handful of voters who would fall into

that narrow category, but I kind of doubt it. And I'm not even sure Sanford campaigned on an opposition to gay marriage in the first place. Even if he did, I don't see the relevance to McCain's point.

I think it's safe to conclude that Miss McCain just made a thoughtless, dopey statement — one that, in my opinion, is pretty representative of her political commentaries on a number of issues.

Unfortunately, I believe her statement was also representative of how *a lot* of people approach the issue of gay marriage. Many seem to believe that an endorsement of a candidate is also an endorsement of their views on gay marriage. I have a few liberal friends who even told me prior to the 2012 election that they *couldn't* vote for Mitt Romney because he opposed gay marriage. That position makes no sense to me, and it never has.

As I've mentioned before in my columns, I support gay marriage. Yet, I've never factored that stance into my evaluation of a political candidate. Why not? Because it's completely irrelevant. Politicians don't get to define marriage. State-wide elections on specific changes to marriage laws do. And I don't see that changing anytime soon. Even if the Supreme Court decides to do something groundbreaking with its ruling on California's *Proposition 8*, I can't imagine a scenario in which representative government will *ever* play a role in this decision.

So if you're voting for a candidate based on their stance on marriage, whether it be a local congressman or the president of the United States, all you're doing is voting on someone's personal opinion and not an actual policy. You might as well be voting for them because they like the same television show that you do. Yet, somehow, this issue has been used successfully for years by politicians on both sides of the aisle.

Now, maybe it's different if you're of the opinion that anyone who opposes gay marriage is a bigot, and you can't possibly vote for a bigot. But if that were the case, anyone who voted for either Barack Obama or John McCain in the 2008 was voting for a bigot. I just don't put a lot of stock in that charge. Assuming bigotry is narrow-minded. There are good, fair-minded people on both sides of the issue.

I feel that the distinction between a candidate's opinion and the policies they can enact is an important one that people should consider. Individual voters have a far greater say on the future of gay marriage than politicians do. Someone like me has the choice to vote for the legalization of gay marriage in my state of Colorado, while also voting for political candidates who (regardless of their *opinion* on gay marriage) will pursue a smaller government, pro-growth policies, reducing the national debt, a strong military, personal responsibility, and other fundamentals that I believe are important.

Now, on the topic of the issue itself, here's why I believe it makes perfect sense for a conservative to support gay marriage (hopefully I'll come across as more coherent than Meghan McCain did):

Along with the distinction I described above (a candidate's opinion vs. the policies they can enact), I believe that there is another important distinction that people should think about. That distinction is the one between legal marriage and the spiritual commitment of marriage. To me, they are two very different things.

Legal marriage, as in the state legally recognizing the contract of marriage between two people, is technically just a civil union. That contract has nothing to do with spirituality or religion. It's the beliefs, commitments, and relationships that people *bring* to their marriages that define how they are recognized within a particular faith. In other words, a

government's definition of marriage is not God's definition of marriage. I don't think anyone can honestly make the case that it is. So when people cite the words of the Bible or other religious views as their reason for why gay marriage should not be permitted, I just can't figure out that argument. After all, atheists get married all the time, and no one seems to care about that. Why isn't religion invoked when it comes to them?

It's true that the Bible states that homosexuality is a sin, but I've always found it interesting, as a Christian, that it is *specifically* described as such only twice. If you compare that with acts described as sins far more extensively in the Bible — including ones that each and every one of us commit on an almost daily basis — I just can't figure out why homosexuality is such a stickler for so many people.

Some people oppose gay marriage in the interest of preserving the family structure in our society, which is what former presidential candidate, Rick Santorum (along with many other social conservatives) is big on. I respect that viewpoint, but disagree with it.

The way I see it, that stance actually falls more in line with liberalism than it does conservatism.

After all, conservatives are the ones who typically believe that the freedom of individuals needs to be defended and promoted. They believe in letting people live their lives the way they see fit, out from under the thumb of government, as long as they're not infringing on other people's rights or creating a public safety concern.

Liberals, on the other hand, believe in reining in the freedoms of individuals for the sake of perceived benefits to society. They're the ones who are always trying to save people from themselves, and rationalizing their actions by insisting that what they're doing is for *the greater good*. Liberals are

the nannies and busybodies, like Michael Bloomberg, who think they know what's best for everyone else and impose their will on the public through policies.

So, with same-sex marriage not being a public-safety concern, and not infringing on other people's rights (it certainly doesn't affect my marriage to my wife), I don't see why a pro gay-marriage stance is anything but consistent with conservative principles.

Call me crazy… And I'm sure several of you will.