Cognitive Dissonance in a Recession: Minnesota GOP Attacks Marriage Equality in Land of "Gayest City in America"

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MINNESOTA GOP ATTACKS MARRIAGE EQUALITY IN LAND OF “AMERICA’S GAYEST CITY”

Minnesota has a tradition of tolerance and progressive thinking on the subject of minority rights, from Hubert Humphrey’s stewardship of the Civil Rights Act to Paul Wellstone’s impassioned pleas for the downtrodden.

While it has recently lagged behind states in New England and even its neighbor to the south in the recognition of marriage equality (although recent recalls of judges belie Iowa’s step forward), Minnesota, and Minneapolis in particular, has been well known as gay friendly, culminating recently in unseating (at least in popular conception) San Francisco as “America’s Gayest City” according to The Advocate (albeit using an admittedly unscientific methodology).

Minneapolis is the paradigm of “New Gay,” reported Jason Jones in a fairly amusing satire of The Advocate’s findings on The Daily Show this week.

Not everyone is waving the [rainbow] flag, however.

Recalcitrance toward marriage equality has often been justified as adherence to a particular ideological approach to religious texts. Interpretations of scripture are myriad, however, and as diverse as the people that follow them.

The arc of those interpretations, like MLK’s arc bending toward justice, is bending toward acceptance and inclusion.
The most recent example of making homosexuals feel welcome in the church arrived this week courtesy of the Minneapolis-St. Paul presbytery, which cast the deciding vote to permit ordination of gay people in same-sex relationships in the Presbyterian church.

Despite all of this, the GOP in Minnesota intends to put a constitutional amendment on the November 2012 ballot—thus avoiding Governor Dayton’s veto pen—asking voters directly to define marriage as only being “between one man and one woman,” the type of diction used to avoid the reality of the second half of the question: “should we enshrine discrimination into our civil rights charter?”

Given the GOP’s takeover of both the House and the Senate in last year’s midterms they are likely to succeed in getting the proposed amendment on the ballot. What is less certain is the wisdom in doing it considering that Minnesota Republicans swept into power on a wave of fiscal anxiety, not promises of social conservatism.

That mandate may have already been rejected, explaining Tom Emmer and his platform of antipathy toward marriage equality’s loss to a dismal former U.S. Senator.

The Republicans are pressing forward anyway. Their political capital may hang in the balance.

So does Minnesota’s reputation for equality.