Warren Limmer, the black knight of Minnesota's marriage equality debate

Aaron J Shuler, University of Oregon
Warren Limmer successfully shepherded his proposal for a ballot initiative asking to enshrine a ban on marriage equality into the Minnesota Constitution.

He did so with a questionable mandate in the face of polls that suggest he is on the wrong side of the inevitable, making him reminiscent of the Black Knight in *Monty Python’s The Holy Grail*.

The Black Knight kicked when he had no arms, threatened to bite when he lost his legs. The arguments against marriage equality similarly ring hollow.

“Marriage is for reproduction to perpetuate the human race.”

This can be true but it is by no means an exhaustive statement of marriage. We do not foreclose marriage to people that cannot or will not bear children, whether they are older citizens, infertile couples or those who simply do not wish to be parents.

Moreover, plenty of people are still having children in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont and Iowa. The idea that couples make their reproduction decisions based on whether two men they have never met can get married is one of the more ridiculous canards circulated.

‘Tis but a scratch.

Which leads to another common refrain from proponents of the marriage equality ban:

“Same-sex marriage would demean my opposite-sex marriage.”

If Elizabeth Taylor and Britney Spears have not already done this, then it is difficult to understand how two people already in a long-term monogamous relationship who wish to make it official will do so. Permitting marriage equality would in fact shore up the ranks of the committed in marriage.

Just a flesh wound.

“It is an abomination.”

Marriage equality would not open the doors of churches that believe this to gay people. It would simply not shut them at City Hall

I’m invincible.

A ‘no’ vote in November 2012 would not result in marriage equality. It would simply prevent inscribing the deprivation of civil rights into Minnesota’s civil rights charter.

But Mr. Limmer and the Minnesota GOP’s move betrays a knowledge that the Arc of Justice is bending away from them and that this might be their last gasp at halting the march of equality.

Even Jim Daly of Focus on the Family knows that it is a lost cause with 65-70% of Americans in their 20s and 30s supporting marriage equality.
Despite those numbers it is possible for the ballot measure to succeed. One need only look to California’s Prop 8 for evidence.

However, tolerance for marriage equality is irreversible and will only accelerate. Those who stand in its way will undoubtedly be on the wrong side of history and will have to answer the same questions posed by Richard and Mildred Loving a generation ago.

There are still well-intentioned people that oppose marriage equality. Shaming them with campaigns such as “Stop the Hate” erroneously and ineffectively pushes them out of reconsideration.

Instead they should be asked to consider the real reasons for their opposition and whether those reasons justify denying their fellow citizen a fundamental right they feel so strongly about.

They may conclude that those with a leg to stand on would step aside and let equality through.