

Until death do us part

Proposed amendment banning same sex marriage is closeminded, unlawful

Marriage can take on two forms. The first is a religious-based state-ment of two souls joining in an eternal and loving bond that supersedes any and all man-made laws or dictums. The second is a state's recognition of the partnership of two citizens who have decided to share legal and fiscal responsibilities until death or the legal termination of the partnership.



STUART HUTSON

This simple division of ideas is inherent in the concept of the division of church and state, yet a coalition of religious leaders and so-called "family-policy experts" is crusading to further blur the already-fuzzy division by promoting an amendment to the U.S. Constitution stating that marriage only can be between a man and a woman.

Spurred by Vermont's year-old civil union law — granting marriage-like rights to same-sex couples — the Alliance for Mar-

riage is attempting to ensure that any partnership outside of its dogmatic concept of marriage is to be deemed illegal.

The members of this organization have evidently failed to realize that the division between church and state exists because, while religious-based organizations are assured the right to discriminate how they wish, this country's government is based on the commitment to uphold the freedom of its citizens, unless that freedom poses an inherent danger to the common good.

The freedom of two members of the same sex to join in legal matrimony may pose a danger to certain group's sense of right and wrong — and churches may most definitely interpret it as a danger to people's souls.

However, until God personally steps up to the podium of the U.S. Senate and states that he will strike down the nation with fire and brimstone unless it outlaws this type of union, it poses no threat to the common good.

Members of this coalition state the amendment is validat-

ed because recent polls have indicated that the U.S. populace does not support gay or lesbian marriage on a ratio of as much as two-to-one.

No rational person would deny that a majority of Americans do not believe that gay or lesbian marriage is religiously validated. After all, America is mostly Protestant with Catholicism coming in a strong second. The majority of both these churches do not condone unions of same-sex couples.

However, there was a time when many — maybe even most — Americans did not believe that interracial marriage should be allowed.

Many read aloud dogmatically interpreted passages from their Bibles, Korans and Torahs in strict opposition to what they considered a travesty against humanity.

They assured lawmakers that allowing the interracial unions would cause strife in America's cultural systems and would lead down the slippery slope to legalized bestiality and incest.

Anyone publicly displaying these opinions today would be

promptly labeled as an ignorant bigot and laughed at, yet these are the same arguments against gay marriages used by the Alliance for Marriage.

In 20 years, they will be laughed at as well.

Until then, America's government and citizens should resist any addition to state or federal law mandating the legally irrational discrimination against law-abiding citizens.

Stuart Hutson is a senior journalism major.



ANGELIQUE FORD/THE BATTALION

U.S. should follow Ireland's lead with tax cuts

The majority of Americans, and college students in particular, appear to be uninterested in the complex affairs that take place beyond their oceans. The impressive resurgence of Ireland is one story that many have missed. Opinions of Ireland are likely frozen in time since 1846, when a potato famine devastated the Emerald Isle, and the Catholic, desperately poor Irish, faced a seemingly impossible assimilation into American culture. Since then, much has changed in both countries. And now, little, old Ireland has upstaged Europe, pointing the way for an economic renaissance.



JONATHAN JONES

The small island is in the middle of a boom, and the United States and Europe would do well to take notice.

The Irish have discovered what the United States needs to rediscover, and Europe should learn — lower tax rates are very good for the economy. Ireland has been an aggressive tax cutter, a fact that upsets the statist European Union. Voters there recently dealt a blow to the Brussels-based EU, rejecting the Treaty of Nice, which is necessary for member countries to ratify for continued expansion.

This has been a long time coming. The European Union had voted to formally condemn Ireland's fiscal policies on the odd premise that tax cuts overheat the economy and lead to inflation. Nothing of the sort has happened. *The Washington Times* reports that just 15 years ago, unemployment topped 15 percent, and "government spending consumed more than one-half of economic output, confiscatory tax rates stifled growth and budget deficits skyrocketed to 15 percent of the gross do-

mestic product."

Long in contention for the title of the world's poorest developed country, more than 200,000 Irish people immigrated to seek new opportunities

The Irish have discovered what the United States needs to rediscover, and Europe should learn — lower tax rates are very good for the economy.

in the booming U.S. economy of the 1980s. Ireland now has to import many of its workers, most coming to compete in what is fast becoming the high-tech center of Europe. Finance Minister Charlie McCreevy, part of 10 supply-side economists, who in 1986 offered opinions aimed at solv-

ing a very bad economic situation, has stated that the EU condemnation was an act of "envy." Panic might be the better word.

In the mid-1980s, the tax relief started in earnest. The top personal income tax was reduced from 65 percent to 42 percent beginning this year. Also, corporate income tax rates have been greatly reduced, allowing for a boom in foreign investment. The Irish now enjoy one of lowest corporate tax rates in the world, and that will be slashed to 12.5 percent in 2003. Growth has averaged 10 percent for the last six years and has consistently been triple the EU average. The French, German and Italian leaders of a more centralized Europe favor the harmonization of tax rates — upward. But Ireland's low-tax, business-friendly climate and flexible markets have again demonstrated the magic of lower tax rates.

Critics of supply-side economics

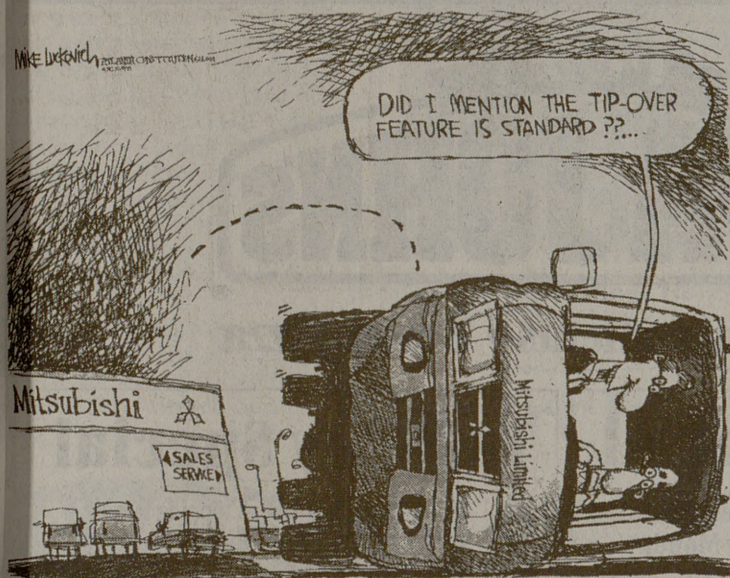
claim that reductions cause budget deficits, when in fact they help to balance budgets. Ireland is currently enjoying its first surplus in 50 years, perhaps the most impressive result of the rate reductions.

More money in the hands of people with strong incentives to work and create can do wonders. The talents of entrepreneurs and resources will continue to flee from the stifling policies of high-tax nations toward the prosperity of the low-tax ones. For 15 years, Ireland has bravely stood up against mounting pressure from unaccountable Belgian bureaucrats advocating the statist status quo. In the process, McCreevy and his countrymen have unleashed the "Celtic Tiger." As Ireland continues to boom, maybe others across the globe will start to take action.

Jonathan Jones is a junior political science major.

"Light trucks?" Hardly.

Bill forcing SUVs to become more fuel efficient should be passed



(U-WIRE) — We see the lifestyle on the commercials: Tearing it up down a muddy road, plowing through the snow, driving up to the top of the mountains. Ah, the freedom to roam the outdoors you get in a sports utility vehicle!

Of course, only about 13 percent of SUVs ever leave the road, so mostly they're used for tearing it up down suburban streets, blocking the vision of the people behind them and sucking down that gasoline.

Of those three things, consuming fuel like a fish consumes water seems to be what SUVs are best at. The massive Ford Excursion gets 10 miles to the gallon. During a time of high gas prices, it would seem there wouldn't be a demand for such things.

However, "light trucks," which include SUVs, pick-ups and minivans comprised nearly half of automotive sales in America last year.

While pick-ups are extremely popular, it's SUVs that are the hot new trend.

The Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or the CAFE standard, which mandates that automotive companies keep an average fuel efficiency for all

the cars they make, was created in 1975, when light trucks were less than 20 percent of automotive sales.

Since back then they were used mainly by farmers and ranchers for transporting car-

So with SUVs, automotive companies have gotten away with making a big, popular car without the hassle of actually making it fuel efficient.

go, the fuel efficiency average for light trucks was set at 20.7 miles per gallon. The standard set for passenger cars was 27.5 mpg.

However, the SUV isn't really a truck, because it can't really be used to haul farm equipment like a pick-up can. Many SUVs don't have any more passenger seats than a family sedan. And despite the ads, they're rarely used for heading out in the wilderness with Bob Seger's "Like a Rock" playing in the background.

So with SUVs, automotive

companies have gotten away with making a big, popular car without the hassle of actually making it fuel efficient. But members of the U.S. Congress are at work trying to plug this gaping loophole.

A bill introduced by Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., would make automotive companies bring the average fuel efficiency up to 27.5 mpg for both passenger cars and light trucks. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, chair of the House Energy and Air Quality subcommittee, has suggested he will introduce similar legislation.

Legislation like Schumer's is necessary not only for the protection of the environment, since cars that use more gas make more pollution, but also to do something about America's energy crisis.

With more cars on the road that aren't required to meet high fuel efficiency standards, we have more demand for oil. As Harper's Magazine pointed out, if we started drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, we would be 42,000,000 gallons of oil richer a day. If the average fuel efficiency of SUVs in America increased 3 mpg, we would have

49,000,000 gallons.

Of course, no amount of changes to the fuel efficiency standard will make SUVs safer. They're still be twice as likely to roll over than normal vehicles because of their high center of gravity. Firestone has argued that the deaths attributed to their faulty tires may well be because of Ford's badly engineered Explorer.

And then there's Daimler-Chrysler's Jeep Grand Cherokee, which the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has begun investigating due to reports that it goes into reverse with no reason as it's being driven down the road. That could really mess up your transmission — not to mention your skull if you're in front of an 18-wheeler hurling down I-35.

But at least the legislation will cut down on the amount of pollution being spewed out by all the SUVs rolling down the road.

Whether they're rolling on their wheels or on their sides is another issue.

Kris Banks
Daily Texan
University of Austin

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call
014 Reed McDonald
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111
Fax: (979) 845-2647
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com