

Aloha Sandy,

Thanks for your comments. This effort is not being led by me. Bills have already been introduced last session, and I believe many were waiting to see what the United States Supreme Court would do. With the decision of the courts, many believe same-sex marriage (SSM) is inevitable. It won't happen overnight, but it has already started in several states and countries.

My position is the state government would sanction or allow same-sex marriage but churches such as ours would not be forced to conduct SSM. OLPH would not have to do SSM.

My position is about equality and fairness. It is not about my religion's beliefs being forced on a society or people who are not Catholics. There was a time blacks were slaves; A time when Filipino, Japanese, Chinese, and Puerto Rican plantation laborers were second class citizens; When a woman was expected to stay home and take care of the house and children; When a brown man could not marry a white woman; when minorities couldn't go to college.

Thank goodness times have changed. Thank goodness people have evolved and become better. Thank goodness prejudice and discrimination have disappeared or become less.

Same-sex couples are here today. They live in our town, maybe your street. They shop where you shop and they participate in life like everyone else does. I wouldn't be surprised if some go to our church. You may even know one or two. There also are gay Catholics. Do you condemn them to hell? Are you judging them based on their love? Are they eternally damned? I don't believe so.

Our God is loving, compassionate, for the persecuted and weak, kind, and forgiving. He will judge us based on what we do in life and based on what's in our hearts.

I know this is a sensitive issue in the church, and I feel my position is one others in the church support. Not everyone, of

course. I know there is opposition. But I am a state senator for all people in my district, not just Roman Catholics. In 10 years, this issue will not be controversial.

Thank you for allowing me to respond to you. Feel free to share this e-mail with Father Ed and Bishop Larry as well.

**Respectfully,
Will Espero**