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MARJORIE R. ESMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

May 4, 2009

Via fax 318-473-6670

Mr. John "Buck" Lincecum
Mr. Joe Bishop
Mr. Jamie L. Floyd
Mr. Theodore Fountaine, Jr.

Mr. Richard G. Vanderlick
Mr. Oliver Overton
Mr. Steve Coco
Mr. Richard Billings
Mr. Scott Perry

Gentlemen:

This letter is to urge you not to reconsider the proposed resolution banning same-sex marriage in Rapides Parish. You have already recognized that the rights to marriage are governed by state law. Nothing that this or any other local body does can affect who can marry and under what circumstances. Louisiana law presently prohibits people of the same sex from marrying. Rapides Parish is powerless to change the state of this law. If that were changed for some reason, Rapides Parish would similarly be powerless to affect the outcome. Why waste time and resources on something that you cannot control?

A significant percentage of the population is gay or lesbian. Rapides Parish enjoys the benefits of many national corporations that employ its residents, including American Airlines, Continental Airlines, Delta Airlines, Boise Cascade, International Paper, among others. Each of these companies has a policy protecting its employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These companies have chosen to locate in Rapides Parish and to employ Rapides Parish residents regardless of their sexual orientation. They choose to respect all of their employees and to guarantee them equal rights.

There is a difference between employment discrimination and marriage. But for Rapides Parish to go on record as a place hostile to a significant portion of its residents would send the wrong message to these and other employers who might choose to locate here, employ your residents, and make Rapides a welcoming place for everyone.

If you pass this resolution, Rapides Parish will tell the world that it does not respect the privacy and personal lives of many of its people, and that it takes this position even when doing so has no legal effect.

Out of respect for your employers, your residents, and for your own legislative processes, respect the vote you took on March 16.

Sincerely,

Marjorie R. Esman