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Citizens Initiative For Equal Marriage Amendment Filed ***Libertarian and Republican Advocates Start Initiative Campaign***

PHOENIX AZ – A Phoenix businessman and a Tucson attorney have filed with the Arizona Secretary of State's office today an initiative to place an "equal marriage" constitutional amendment before Arizona voters.

Warren Meyer, a business owner, libertarian blogger and author, and Erin Ogletree Simpson, a retired Tucson lawyer and chair of the Arizona Log Cabin Republicans caucus, will chair and co-chair **Equal Marriage Arizona**, the newly formed campaign committee that filed the citizens initiative today.

Said Meyer,

"Equal Marriage Arizona has filed today a citizens initiative in anticipation that the United States Supreme Court rulings on DOMA and California's Proposition 8 may return the issue of marriage equality back to the states. We think it's time to give Arizona voters a chance to join the twelve states, three Indian tribes and the District of Columbia that already grant marriage equality for committed straight and same-sex couples. The Equal Marriage Arizona initiative is simple, straight-forward and sensible."

The language of the proposed initiative strikes the words "a man and a woman" from Article XXX, Section 1 of Arizona's Constitution and inserts the words "two persons." It additionally adds a second paragraph that says,

"A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION, RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION, OR RELIGIOUS SOCIETY SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SOLEMNIZE OR OFFICIATE ANY PARTICULAR MARRIAGE OR RELIGIOUS RITE OF MARRIAGE IN VIOLATION OF ITS CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION."

Added Ogletree Simpson,

“We think it is significant that this initiative for equal marriage in Arizona be launched from the political right, as we believe this is an issue of personal freedom. Likewise, we believe it’s critical that our amendment protects religious freedoms by specifically saying that while equal marriage will be recognized by the state, no church or religious organization will be required to solemnize or officiate a marriage rite between any two people.”

To qualify for the November 2014 ballot, Equal Marriage Arizona needs to collect at least 259,213 signatures of Arizona registered voters. Equal Marriage Arizona has a goal of collecting at least 400,000 signatures to ensure ballot qualification, with both volunteer and paid signature gathering.

Equal Marriage Arizona has already received national support from Our America, the political advocacy committee led by Gary Johnson, the two-term Republican governor of neighboring New Mexico, and has been endorsed by the Log Cabin Republicans national organization. While support starts from the political right as a statement of individual liberty, Equal Marriage Arizona will seek support from voters from all political parties and ideologies throughout the state.

Concluded Meyer,

“We’re confident the support - political and financial - can be gathered to ensure ballot qualification and victory on this important issue of individual rights and religious freedom. This won’t be easy. We need everyone’s help in gathering signatures, contributing financially and urging their neighbors to vote for equal marriage and religious freedom. Working together, we’re confident in the fairness of Arizonans and the outcome of this effort.”

For further information please visit www.EqualMarriageArizona.com.

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