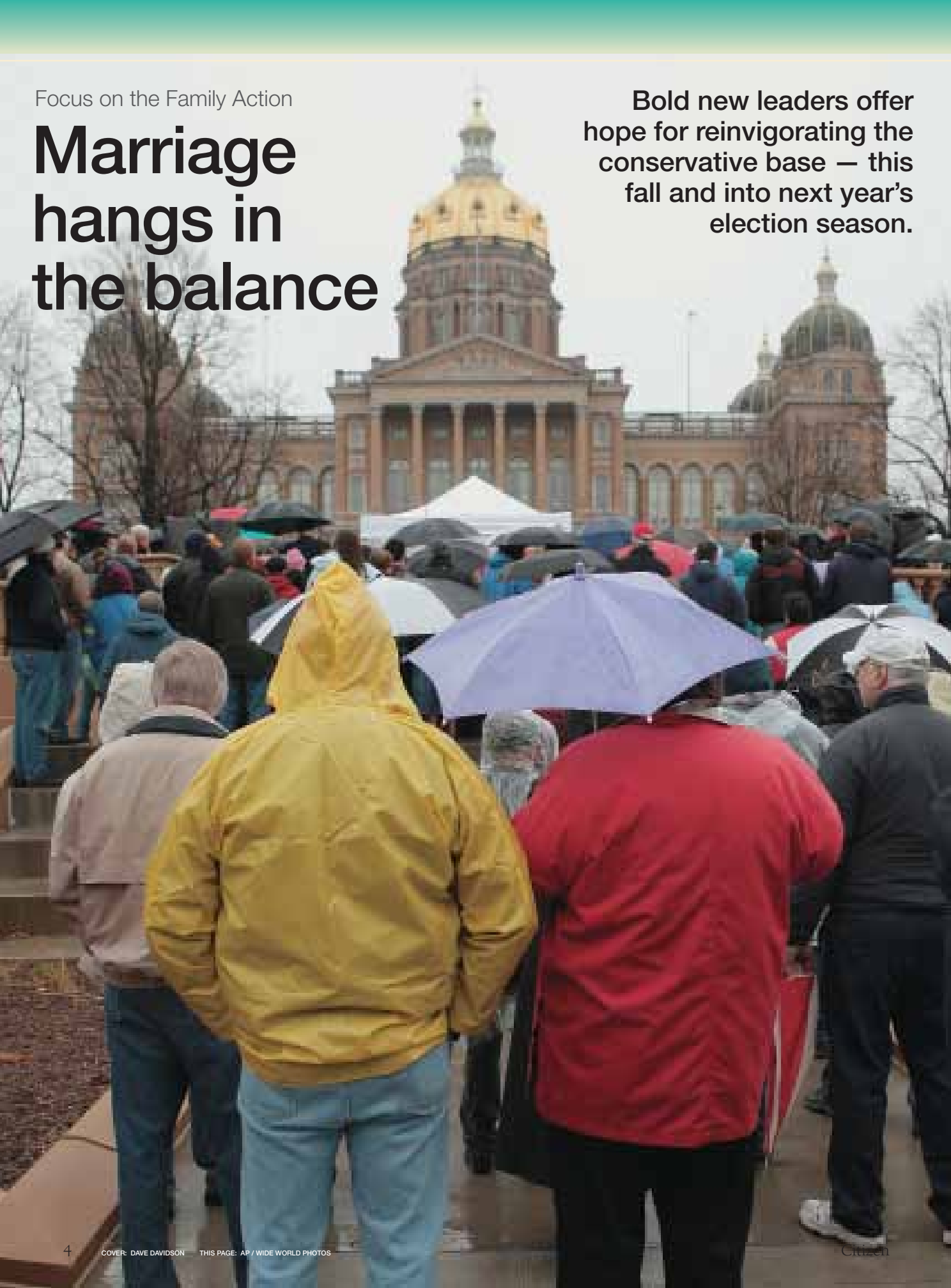


Focus on the Family Action

Marriage hangs in the balance

Bold new leaders offer hope for reinvigorating the conservative base — this fall and into next year's election season.





MAN OF ACTION What sets Iowa gubernatorial candidate Bob Vander Plaats apart is his decisive commitment to take action on marriage as soon as he takes office.

by John Paulton

In April of this year, the Iowa Supreme Court shocked the nation by legalizing same-sex marriage in the Hawkeye State. The court, aided and abetted by a complicit governor, succeeded in making Iowa one of the first states outside of New England to allow homosexual marriage.

But the fight over marriage in the Heartland is far from over. Indeed, that battle may take center stage as the 2010 election season begins to unfold.

From Dubuque to Sioux City, pro-family Iowans are standing up in droves to make their voices heard and put the court in its place. And Bob Vander Plaats is leading that chorus. The 46-year-old leadership consultant and former high-school teacher and basketball coach is running for governor. And although the election is more than a year away, he has already attracted a huge following — many of whom are energized by the bold pledge that Vander Plaats has made.

“On Day One,” Vander Plaats

tells audiences all over the state, “I will issue an executive order to put a stop to same-sex marriages in the state of Iowa until the people have the right to vote on it.”

The reaction from the people of Iowa has been resounding. When a group of pastors in eastern Iowa invited him to speak on marriage, a crowd of 50 to 75 was expected. Instead, Vander Plaats arrived to an overflow crowd of 538 people jammed into the church.

But beyond the anecdotes, the power of Vander Plaats’ pledge is reflected in public opinion polls. In the race for the Republican nomination for governor, Vander Plaats is up against veteran politicians like former House Speak-

er Chris Rants, state Sen. Jerry Behn, state Rep. Rod Roberts and Senate Minority Leader Paul McKinley. Yet Vander Plaats, who has never held public office, holds a 3-to-1 lead over his nearest Republican competitor.

All of the elected officials he’s competing with have pro-marriage voting records, and with varying degrees of resolve they have worked toward a state marriage-protection amendment in the Legislature. Even the other non-politician, businessman Christian Fong, takes a pro-marriage position.

But what sets Vander Plaats apart is his decisive commitment to take action as soon as he takes office. He calls his planned executive order the Foundation Proclamation, with an overt nod to Abraham Lincoln, who objected to the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Dred Scott* decision and later issued his famous Emancipation Proclamation.

Perhaps part of his appeal to Iowans is that he clearly sees the big-picture danger that an out-of-control court poses to basic freedoms. As strongly as Vander Plaats believes in the sanctity of the God-ordained institution of marriage, he believes this face-off with the courts goes far beyond

Marriage on the ballot

- In Washington state, **Referendum 71** will appear on the November ballot. The measure would repeal a domestic-partnership law that mirrors marriage. For more information, visit www.fpiw.org.
- In Maine, voters will decide on **Question 1**, which would restore the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. In May, the Legislature voted to allow gay marriage. For more information, visit www.standformarriagemaine.com. ●

RALLYING CRY Marriage advocates gather outside the Iowa Capitol in April, days after the state Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act and legalized same-sex marriage.

OPTION ULTRASOUND

[A monthly report on Focus on the Family's pregnancy medical clinics]

'We are exceptionally thankful for the ultrasound machine'

Pamela Palumbo, executive director, Bowie Crofton and Severna Park Pregnancy Clinic, Maryland:



Pamela Palumbo, executive director, Bowie Crofton and Severna Park Pregnancy Clinic, Maryland.

"Jenna was 21 weeks pregnant and going for an abortion when she came into our clinic instead. With an RN trained in ultrasound immediately available, Jenna was given a 3-D/4-D ultrasound, a true window to the womb. Jenna changed her mind and chose to carry to term, saying, 'I had no idea how developed my baby was and am so thankful you showed me. I could never have an abortion now.'

"The OUP grant we received for a 3-D/4-D ultrasound machine and training is allowing us to reach and engage larger numbers of at-risk women with life-revealing ultrasound. With the many at-risk women coming into our Severna Park clinic — which formally housed an abortion clinic — and the large number of late-term abortions performed

near our Bowie Crofton office, we are exceptionally thankful for the ultrasound machine.

"We are so very thankful to Focus on the Family for their passion and commitment to train and equip pregnancy clinics to

serve with excellence. Seeing the impact this lifesaving ministry has in our communities gives us the faith and confidence that we truly can make an amazing difference, one life at a time."

Most recent Option Ultrasound grants

Ultrasound machine placements

Heart to Heart Pregnancy Center, Laramie, Wyo.

Westside Pregnancy Clinic Los Angeles (donated in honor of Dr. and Mrs. Dobson)

Learn more at www.heartlink.org

the issue of marriage. The Iowa Supreme Court, he told *Citizen*, "drove a car without a license," by claiming three powers it does not possess.

First, he says, "They legislated from the bench by saying Iowa will be a same-sex marriage state. They don't have that ability to make law; only the Legislature does."

Second, "They executed it from the bench by saying that all 99 counties will follow suit. They have no executive authority. That belongs solely to the governor of Iowa."

Third, "They intended to amend the constitution by saying they're holding up Iowa's consti-

tution to an evolving standard. And obviously they don't have that ability. Only the people of Iowa have the ability to amend the constitution."

Vander Plaats warns Iowans that this power grab transcends marriage and threatens every one of our liberties. "If you continue to allow the Supreme Court to go outside its jurisdiction and to take power that isn't theirs," he said, "every one of your freedoms is up for grabs, whether it's private property, free enterprise, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of press, assembly, how you educate your children. And if we don't have an executive that is willing to hold





STRONG SUPPORT Although the election is more than a year away, Bob Vander Plaats has already attracted a huge following, including many of the marriage advocates who rallied at the state Capitol in April.

that Supreme Court in check by issuing an executive order ... our children will inherit tyranny, not liberty.”

Should he win the Republican nomination in June, Vander Plaats will go head-to-head with incumbent Democrat Gov. Chet Culver, who reneged on a promise to Iowans that he would do

“whatever it takes to protect marriage between a man and a woman.” Just a few days after the Iowa Supreme Court ruled, Culver announced his opposition to a constitutional amendment to protect traditional marriage.

A GOP revival in 2010?

Vander Plaats also strikes a chord when he talks about running as a Republican “in spite of the Republican Party.” Indeed, all over the country pro-family conservatives have been frustrated with the Republican Party’s often lackluster response to core conservative issues. As a result, the GOP has suffered enormous losses in the last two elections, federally and in most states.

But widespread recognition of this problem has opened the door to some bold new leaders — such as Bob Vander Plaats — who offer hope for reinvigorat-

BACKING DOWN Should he win the Republican nomination, Bob Vander Plaats will go head-to-head with incumbent Democrat Gov. Chet Culver, who reneged on a promise to do “whatever it takes to protect marriage between a man and a woman.”

ing the Republican Party base. In addition, Americans are increasingly waking up to the radical agenda of the Democratic Party, which controls the White House and Congress. Combined, that spells a possible turnaround for the GOP in 2010.

Historical analysis also points to potentially big gains for Republicans in 2010. In the 16 mid-term elections since World War II, the president’s party has lost an average of 24 seats in the U.S. House. And that average jumps when the president’s approval ratings drop below 50 percent, as President Obama’s have in recent polls. With congressional approval ratings approaching record-low levels, Democrats will be further challenged.

Perhaps the most striking statistical advantage for Republicans in 2010 is that, as a result of



Change is brewing in Virginia, New Jersey

While most of the nation focuses on the 2010 elections, a few states have elections this November that could prove to be leading indicators for next year's trends.



Virginia governor's race

Attorney General Bob McDonnell, Republican (left)
State Sen. Creigh Deeds, Democrat



New Jersey governor's race

Chris Christie, Republican (left)
Incumbent Gov. Jon Corzine, Democrat

Paid for by Focus on the Family Action.

the drubbings the party took in 2006 and 2008, very few Republican members of the U.S. House represent traditionally Democratic districts, while scores of Democrats represent tradition-

ally Republican districts. Political analyst Charlie Cook notes that there are 83 House Democrats who represent districts carried by George W. Bush in 2004, while there are just six House

Republicans from districts won by John Kerry.

The bottom line is that Republicans will be operating in a target-rich environment in 2010, while Democrats will be put on the defensive.

On the other hand, the U.S. Senate historically has been less impacted by mid-term elections, and in 2010 Senate Democrats will enjoy some battleground advantages that should limit Republican gains. That's because Republicans will be forced to defend numerous open seats as a result of GOP retirements. In addition, nearly half of the 40 seats held by Republicans will be up for election, compared to fewer than a third of Democratic seats. Still, Republicans could gain some ground in the Senate due to the increasing vulnerability of leading Democrats such as Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

Virginia and New Jersey may give clues

While most of the nation focuses on the 2010 elections, a few states have elections this November that could prove to be leading indicators for next year's trends. No state will be watched more closely than Virginia. The Old Dominion State, a Republican stronghold in recent decades, has veered sharply to the Left in the last three years, with Democrats having taken both U.S. Senate seats and gaining control of the state Senate.

"This is a make-or-break election for Virginia," says Victoria Cobb, president of The Family Foundation in Richmond. Virginia's big race this fall is the governor's race, where Attorney General Bob McDonnell, the Republican, is squaring off against state Sen. Creigh Deeds,

Get the latest news from a pro-family perspective



Every week, more than 10,000 people regularly tune in to the Focus Action Update, a 10-minute video feature from *CitizenLink* that keeps you up-to-date on hot political topics.

Stuart Shepard, director of digital media at Focus Action, hosts the show, which launched in January. He is joined by Tom Minnery, senior vice president of government and public policy at Focus Action and editor of *Citizen*, as well as other pro-family experts and leaders.

“Tom is not only incredibly knowledgeable about pro-family issues, he also has been a part of significant pro-family events over the past couple of decades,” Shepard said. “He knows the players and what’s at stake. I often remind him that some people would be willing to drive hours

ON THE SET Stuart Shepard, right, and Tom Minnery get the latest from Chris Freund of The Family Foundation of Virginia, during a recent Focus Action Update.

to hear him speak, but with the Focus Action Update, they can benefit from what he knows every week without leaving the house.

“It’s so hard to get a clear picture of what’s happening in our nation from the increasingly biased reports in the mainstream news media. The Focus Action Update offers a clear-headed, pro-family, Christian perspective on important news events.” ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Focus Action Update usually is released every Thursday. Visit CitizenLink.com.

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the Democrat. McDonnell has a vibrant pro-family record and has been targeted by Deeds for his pro-family statements and staunch pro-life voting record. But it is Deeds’ record — including his support for partial-birth abortion — that may prove more controversial in Virginia. As *Citi-*

zen goes to press, McDonnell is maintaining a lead over Deeds.

Cobb’s group, which is associated with Focus on the Family, is taking unprecedented steps to ensure that pro-family Virginians are registered, informed and actually vote. With 11 extra staffers, their “Winning Matters”

project team is working with pastors, running voter-registration drives, distributing up to a million voter guides and conducting a major voter-turnout campaign.

Up the coast in New Jersey, Republican gubernatorial candidate Chris Christie is, at press time, maintaining a lead over incumbent Democrat Gov. Jon Corzine, who is pouring tens of millions of his own money into protecting his seat. While Christie cannot be considered a champion of family issues, he supports many pro-life policies and would be the most socially conservative governor New Jersey has had in many years.

Social conservatives are mobilizing in the Garden State as well, led by Len Deo of the New Jersey Family Policy Council. In addition to voter guides and mailers to educate voters, Deo is planning a 21-county, 21-day tour to sound the alarm on key issues like same-sex marriage, and to activate pro-family citizens in every part of the state.

Should Republicans retake one of these gubernatorial offices — and particularly if they win both — it will clearly signal that the euphoria over President Obama has ended and that a new political wind is blowing.

For 2010 candidates like Bob Vander Plaats, a slight tailwind may be all that is needed to breeze to victory. ●

John Paulton is political editor for Citizen magazine.

Paid for by Focus on the Family Action.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Follow Bob Vander Plaats’ campaign at www.teamvp2010.com/.

Visit CitizenLink.com for daily updates on the issues that matter the most to you.



Focus on the Family Action

Political novice becomes ‘leading light in the Legislature’

When no one else stepped up, Iowa businessman decided he would stand for marriage.

by John Paulton

Less than two years ago, Kent Sorenson had never been involved in politics. Today, few people are more discussed in Iowa politics than the same Kent Sorenson. What happened? Simple: the battle for marriage in Iowa.

In early 2008, Sorenson attended a rally for marriage at the Iowa Capitol. He told *Citizen* that, at the time, he thought that attending the rally “would be the extent of my political career.” After all, even though he cared about the issues, he was busy growing a cleaning business, not to mention the six kids he and his wife were raising and home schooling.

But then his wife gave him two phone numbers to call — of legislators who were blocking

POLITICAL SHOCK Two years ago, Kent Sorenson was busy running a cleaning business and raising his six kids. In November 2008, he shocked the Iowa political establishment by winning a state House seat by 163 votes.

the marriage amendment from being voted on. All he had to do was leave 30-second messages with these legislators, who weren’t answering their phones. But then, surprise, Senate Majority Leader Michael Gronstal answered the call, and Sorenson was pulled into an hour-long conversation. That led to a trip to the Capitol the next day, where he met with Gronstal. But an attempt to meet with his own representative, Democrat Mark Davitt, was unsuccessful even after Sorenson waited two and a half hours.

A few days later, Sorenson came to the Capitol again, this time to witness a big vote on the marriage amendment in the Iowa House. After

the amendment failed on a partisan vote, Sorenson approached Davitt to ask why he, as someone who claimed to support traditional marriage, would oppose the marriage amendment. When Davitt repeatedly tried to change the subject, Sorenson told him, “Mark, I’m going to remember you at the polls.” He then went home and told his wife, “We have to find out who’s running against this guy and get behind them.”

But, with the filing deadline just 11 days away, Davitt remained unopposed. After failing to recruit someone else, Sorenson filed to run.

Now, however, he was on his own. The Republican Party was glad he decided to run, but it was a Democratic district, and in the previous election Republicans had spent a quarter-million dollars in an unsuccessful attempt to win the seat. They weren’t about to target this district again, so all Sorenson got was a pat on the back. Leading Republicans also told him not to talk about marriage in his campaign.

Undeterred, Sorenson recruited volunteer help for his cash-poor campaign, and he knocked on the first of 12,000 doors that he would personally cover. He talked frankly about marriage, life, taxes and other issues — his candor earning him the respect (and sometimes the votes) of those who disagreed with him. On Election Day, after spending a meager \$44,000, Sorenson shocked the Iowa political establishment when he won by 163 votes. “In a terrible year,” says Chuck Hurley of the Iowa Family Policy Center, “he was easily the biggest surprise.”

More importantly, since the election, Sorenson has become, according to Hurley, the “leading light in the Legislature” — even though Democrats control both the House and the Senate.

“He’s a winsome, hardworking businessman,” Hurley said. “He’s a tiger.”

Earlier this year, Sorenson again shocked the political establishment by sending a letter to Iowa’s senior U.S. senator, Chuck Grassley. The letter challenged Grassley on his weak response to the Iowa Supreme Court’s anti-marriage ruling and his apparent softness on President Barack

Obama’s health care plan. The letter led to a meeting with Grassley and, eventually, to stronger conservative statements from Grassley.

“People were really shocked that a freshman legislator would take on a senior U.S. senator from the same party,” Sorenson said. “But I wasn’t elected to be a good Republican; I was elected to stand up for what’s right and to represent the people.”

Sorenson now finds himself targeted, as the leading gay-rights organization in Iowa has made Sorenson its No. 1 target for 2010.

But don’t expect that to change how he operates. About the marriage issue, Sorenson says: “This is a pivotal issue. You have

to communicate about it with respect, but don’t back down.

“This is my generation’s defining moment. This is what our kids are going to be reading about. It’s up to us to do what’s right.” ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit kentsorenson.com.

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Iowa state Rep.
Kent Sorenson

We want to hear from you

Please send letters to the editor to citizeneditor@family.org or *Citizen* magazine, Focus on the Family, Colorado Springs, CO 80995. Please include your first and last name, city, state and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may appear in future issues of *Citizen*. ●