

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

CONTACT:

Sandra M. Poulsen

(804) 239-1663

spoulsen@firstfreedom.org

States of Union: Same-Sex Marriage in Religion, Public Policy and the Constitution

Sunday, November 21, 2010, 4:00-5:30 p.m., VCU Commons Theater, 907 Floyd Avenue

The constitutionality of California's marriage amendment (Prop 8) is being challenged. Will Virginia's marriage amendment be annulled if Prop 8 is overturned? Will religion-based opponents of same-sex marriage be harmed if they are forced to recognize same-sex marriage? Delegate Robert G. Marshall, sponsor of the 2006 Marshall-Newmann Amendment to the Virginia Constitution that defines marriage as between one man and one woman, will defend the amendment. Sarah Warbelow, State Legislative Director at the Human Rights Campaign, will provide an opposing viewpoint. Students and alumni from VCU and the University of Richmond School of Law will present their diverse positions on the religious and ethical issues surrounding same-sex marriage.

The forum, on Sunday, November 21, 4:00-5:30 p.m. in the Virginia Commonwealth University Student Commons Theater at 907 Floyd Avenue, is free and open to the public.

In 2006, 57% of Virginia voters, many of them religious conservatives, ratified the Marshall-Newmann Amendment to the Constitution of Virginia, which states: "That only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage valid in or recognized by this Commonwealth and its political subdivisions." The amendment also states that the Commonwealth would never "create or recognize another union, partnership, or other legal status to which is assigned the rights, benefits, obligations, qualities, or effects of marriage."

Many religion-based opponents of same-sex marriage argue that same-sex marriage rights would violate their freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. Polls show that many Catholics and Evangelical Protestants strongly oppose gay marriage. Recently, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church) has played a role in the controversy. Mainline Protestant denominations, on the other hand, are torn by the question of whether to perform and recognize same-sex unions.

This event is the second in a series of public presentations *Exploring Issues Vital to Religion, Public Policy and the Law*, hosted by a partnership of the First Freedom Center, the Religious Studies Program and L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs of Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Richmond School of Law. The purpose of the series is to inform and engage the public in important religion and public-policy issues that are in the headlines nearly every day.

###

About the First Freedom Center

The mission of the First Freedom Center is to advance the basic human rights of freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. The Center is a politically and religiously neutral 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, visit: www.firstfreedom.org.

About the University of Richmond School of Law

The University of Richmond School of Law educates students to become outstanding lawyers and positive leaders within their communities. The mission of the School of Law is to serve society and the legal profession by educating law students in the highest traditions of the profession, by contributing to the marketplace of ideas, and by service to the community and nation. For more information, visit: <http://www.law.richmond.edu>.

About the VCU Religious Studies Program

The Religious Studies Program in the School of World Studies is guided by the idea that becoming knowledgeable about humanity's Religious traditions is vital to promoting global understanding, cooperation, compassion, and community. Through academic teaching, scholarship, study abroad programs, and public engagement, Religious Studies faculty and students are building bridges to a socially just and sustainable world. For more information, visit: <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wld/academics/majors/relstudies>.

About the VCU L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs

The Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, one of the largest schools of its kind in the Southeast, provides students with the knowledge, skills and experience necessary for success, whether in public service careers or in advanced study. For more information, visit: <http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/gov>.