

# BuzzFeed Politics

## Cato Scholar Hosting Benefit To Protect Maryland's New Marriage Equality Bill

Chris Geidner - BuzzFeed Staff | 7.20.12

Conservative scholar Walter Olson is bringing together libertarian and other “right of center” people to fight for gay and lesbian couples' right to marry.

Conservative leaders and writers will gather Sunday at a private home in New Market, Maryland — the “Antiques Capital of Maryland” — to raise money to advance conservative values on marriage.

But — in a sign of the dramatically changed landscape in the debate over whether gays and lesbians should be able to marry — the conservative gathering hosted by the Cato Institute's Walter Olson will benefit the group fighting to protect the state's new marriage equality law at the ballot this fall.

Although Olson has only been in Maryland for two years after having spent much of the past two decades in New York, the conservative scholar, a [senior fellow](#) at the libertarian think tank's Center for Constitutional Studies and previously of the Manhattan Institute, wanted to step forward to fight for the new law.

The event is taking place from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday at the home of Olson and his husband, Steve Pippin. The couple married in Massachusetts, and Maryland's highest court has held that the state recognizes such out-of-state marriages. The event — with lead hosts donating \$500 — benefits Marylanders for Marriage Equality, which is the group formed to fight the referendum on the bill that will be on the ballot this November.

Saying that he wanted to “make sure that the people who are to the right of center were brought in to the campaign in the most effective way,” Olson told BuzzFeed, “There are tons and tons of people ... who are not necessarily reached by the more visible element of the campaign, which is often geared toward progressive principles.”

Olson put the event, and the Maryland referendum, in the context of other developments — like [this essay](#) in *The American Conservative* — that have highlighted conservative support for

marriage equality. He also said that Maryland's location right outside D.C. potentially gives it special prominence among the four states — including Washington, Maine and Minnesota — to vote on marriage-related issues this fall because of its easy access for D.C. journalists.

"People have talked about how the African-American vote could make a lot of difference, and that's certainly true," Olson said. "But, at the same, Maryland has a lot of people, in western Maryland and other parts of the state, that tend to go for libertarian candidates.

"There is a lot of persuasion to be done," Olson said of efforts to reach out to conservatives, but he thinks gathering the 70 people he is expecting this Sunday is a good start. Although not all of the supporters and host committee are conservatives — Democratic National Committee treasurer Andrew Tobias, a "longtime friend," Olson said, is on the host committee — Olson said that most of the expected attendees are conservatives.

One host committee member, for example, is Sally Satel, who is the author of *PC, M.D.: How Political Correctness is Corrupting Medicine*. Others include Eli Lehrer, who has written for *The Weekly Standard*, and Veronique de Rugy, a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University who writes for National Review Online. Howard Rich, a deep-pocketed patron of libertarian causes and conservative politicians, is also supporting the event.

The full host committee for the event, according to an e-invitation provided to BuzzFeed, includes:

*Walter Olson and Steven Pippin*

*David Boaz and Steve Miller*

*David and Danielle Frum*

*Jonathan Rauch and Michael Lai*

*Andrew Sullivan and Aaron Tone*

*Andrew Tobias*

*Ted Frank*

*Eli and Kari Lehrer*

*Walter Slocombe*

*David Lampo and Don Lawrence*

*Tim Hulsey and Chris Smith*

*Dave Myers*

*Kelly Young and Bill Reinsmith*

*Sally Satel*

*Veronique de Rugy*

*Andrew Hazlett and Geetanjali Chander*

*John Corvino*

*Jennifer Dossin and David Marshall*

*Howard and Andrea Rich*