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Does the Family Research Council Realize the Damage They've Done to the Fight for Marriage?

2010 February 10

tags: [Bigotry](#), [Conservatism](#), [Culture](#), [Culture Wars](#), [extremism](#), [Family Research Council](#), [family values](#), [FRC](#), [Gay Rights](#), [Homosexuality](#), [Peter Sprigg](#), [policing our own](#), [same-sex marriage](#), [social conservatism](#)
 by Calvin Freiburger



Nearly a week has passed since [Family Research Council](#) spokesman Peter Sprigg told [Chris Matthews](#) that [he would support criminalizing homosexual behavior](#). Numerous outlets, including [USA Today](#), the [Huffington Post](#), [Democratic Underground](#), the [Daily Kos](#), [Little Green Footballs](#), the [ACLU](#), and the [Cato Institute](#), not to mention countless liberal blogs and gay websites, have pounced upon the story. It's safe to say that virtually every semi-informed [liberal](#) and homosexual in America will be aware of it before long (if they aren't already), and many are giving it a special slot in their rhetorical arsenal as we speak.

Aside from Cato (which is more [libertarian](#) than [conservative](#)), I have seen no conservative reaction to Sprigg's comments since my own here. The Family Research Council has made no effort to even acknowledge the existence of a scandal (I have emailed them for comment twice—February 4 and February 9—to no avail). Apparently, either (a) there is an internal dispute within FRC about how to address the matter, (b) they assume they aren't going to get a fair shake from the Left anyway and are hoping it'll just blow over, or, most disturbingly, (c) they honestly don't see any cause for concern.

I have already expressed why Sprigg's remarks are morally indefensible. But apparently more needs to be said about the tremendous damage his

remarks—and subsequent silence from the Right—will do both to the conservative movement and to the cause of [traditional marriage](#).

First, Sprigg has all-but destroyed the credibility of the Family Research Council, which has until now been one of social conservatives' most valuable allies, providing sharp analysis, research and commentary on the right to life, civil marriage, religious liberty, the judiciary, education, and more. I have used and promoted [FRC material](#) for years, and I'm certainly not the only one.

From now on, every FRC press release, study, and media appearance will be labeled as coming from “that group who wants to throw gays in jail,” and dismissed as the biased work of bigots. Everybody who continues to rely on FRC material will face similar attacks. And unlike the Left's [usual slander routine](#), this one will be rooted in truth—FRC's Senior Fellow for Policy Studies really said it, and FRC has done nothing to distance themselves from him or his sentiments.

Of course, it's not just those with discernible ties to FRC that have been endangered. Indeed, anybody who expresses legitimate concerns over same-sex marriage and other societal issues pertaining to homosexuality should expect to be tarred as a fellow traveler of Sprigg's sooner or later. [It's simply what liberals do](#). And while we should never expect to appease the Left's demagogic tendencies, we ignore the potency of this particular attack at our own peril.

Committed believers in true marriage will remain firm in their beliefs regardless of Peter Sprigg, and committed advocates of same-sex marriage will continue to see us as bigots regardless of how we react to him. But it is hard to see how Sprigg's comments do anything other than scare away undecided Americans and potential converts.

Consider someone who has not yet made up his mind. When he hears that Sprigg wants to criminalize homosexual behavior, and that FRC apparently agrees, which side do you think he is going to view more sympathetically?

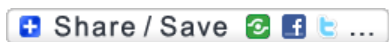
Next, consider a moderate inclined to support same-sex marriage, yet still open-minded on the issue. Is there any doubt that this scandal will do anything other than reinforce her instincts that she's sided with the right people?

Lastly, consider a moderate inclined to *oppose* same-sex marriage, but not yet strongly attached to that belief. At the very least, Sprigg's remarks will make him second-guess the sanity and the motives of the people with whom he has allied himself.

One has to wonder if anybody at the Family Research Council has any inkling of the harm they've done to one of their own top causes—or if for them, like [some of the nineteenth century's more extreme abolitionists of old, it's more about their own moral purity than about actually accomplishing anything](#).

Conservatives who actually believe in *accomplishing* what the Family Research Council claims to support cannot afford to stand idly by as the Left closes in for the kill. We need to draw a clear distinction between marriage's societal importance and genuine discrimination. For all our sakes, Peter Sprigg should step down—but if he doesn't, the rest of us need to be able to honestly say we are not complicit in his offense.

Hailing from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, [Calvin Freiburger](#) is a political science major at [Hillsdale College](#). He also blogs at the [Hillsdale Forum](#) and his personal website, [Calvin Freiburger Online](#).



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The fight is hard enough, with help like this, yikes, come Lord Jesus, come soon

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