

JULY 22, 2004

SCHAKOWSKY OPPOSES SO-CALLED MARRIAGE PROTECTION ACT

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to H.R. 3313, the so-called Marriage Protection Act. This bill would expressly forbid the federal courts, including the Supreme Court, from hearing cases on a Constitutional matter. That not only sounds absurd to me, but I'm sure it confuses American Government students across the country who are learning everyday about our system of checks and balances and the role of the courts in our country.

But this bill not only violates the principle of separation of powers, it also grossly violates our equal protection and due process rights. This bill singles out a group of people who simply want to live in peace with the person they love and denies them access to the courts in order to fight for equal rights. If we pass this bill, then I wonder who is next - what group of people is next on the target list for being singled out and denied rights?

It strikes me that this bill is yet another example of how the Republican leadership in this country simply changes the rules when things aren't going their way so that the outcome will shift in their favor, regardless of the effects on our civil rights. We've seen votes held open for hours and funding cut off for popular and critical programs just so the Republican leadership can have their way. And, in this case, the Republican leadership is willing to go so far as to change the Constitutional rules and principles that we have lived by for centuries - the guarantee that any group or individual who feels their rights have been violated can go to court to seek redress - in order to protect a law that we passed eight years ago. This is simply unacceptable, and I urge my colleagues to vote no on H.R. 3313.