

Opponents of civil marriage for lesbian and gay people will argue that there is no demand for it. For example, speaking in the Dáil in November 2007, Fianna Fail TD, Dr Martin Mansergh, stated that *"it is not a matter that I can recall being raised with me, face to face, in my constituency from any angle, either for or against."*

SILENCE IS BEING USED AS AN EXCUSE FOR INACTION.

MarriageEquality wants you to go directly to your TD and tell them that the rights of lesbians and gay men are infringed by being denied access to civil marriage.

Visiting your TD, Five Easy Steps

- 1** Drop in to their constituency clinics or contact your TDs or Senators via phone, email or post to organise a meeting. Remember turning up in person sends out a really strong message.
- 2** Find out who your TDs are by visiting www.marriagequality.ie.
- 3** Contact us beforehand for support and information about what you might say and the likely views of the politicians you are visiting.
- 4** Visit TDs, tell them you want equality for same-sex couples. TDs like to be asked to do something. They like to have a solution to your problem and for them to tell you how realistic they believe it is for that solution to be achieved. See our document *'Party Positions and Q & A'* on MarriageEquality and some suggested questions for ideas of what you might like to ask them to do.

Make sure to tell them that civil partnership is not marriage or marriage like.
- 5** Contact us and let us know what they said so we can keep track of their attitudes and/or support.

Encourage friends and family to get involved in the campaign and to visit their TDs and other local representatives. Ask them to get in touch with MarriageEquality to kick-start the process.

*See 'FAQ's about visiting your TD' document for further information.

What our supporters who visited their TDs told us:

"After a hour of interesting discussion, he told me that our meeting 'softened' his heart to the issue and that he listened to what I had to say, and that he will consider the subject more."

"I found her genuinely interested, which encouraged me. I have a tendency to be quite cynical about politicians, but my visit made me realise that they are ordinary people, just trying to do their jobs too. She was very open and honest and told me that she had done quite a bit of thinking on the subject over the last year. To start with she was worried about children being brought up in gay and lesbian homes. Having spoken with people who work with children and families, she says she now sees that it is more about the quality of parenting than the gender or sexuality of the parents and her thinking around marriage for same-sex couples has brought her to a place where she saw it as an equality issue, fair and square."

"Firstly, I just want to say that he was extremely friendly and supportive and basically said that we are all equal in the eyes of the law and the law should reflect this. I asked him if he would be willing to support full and equal rights for gay people and he said yes, but, that at present, he couldn't see how such a bill could be passed."

"Dealing with TDs has proved to be quite a lengthy process. It took four weeks of badgering to get my first appointment and at times I felt so disheartened. Nevertheless, I kept making contact with the representatives and as soon as my foot was in the Dail door, I was met with open ears and a willingness to learn. My first meeting was with TD X. He was really great and even introduced me to new contacts and offered advice on how to proceed with the campaign."

"My overall impression was that he will continue with an "incremental process", and that he perhaps feared a public backlash if he pushed for civil marriage. This was implied, not stated. He was very pleasant and courteous, but nevertheless I left feeling second class."

"He has met me on the street and stopped to say hi and ask how things are going. He was very supportive of civil partnership, but is beginning to come around to civil marriage. He told me that Rome wasn't built in a day."

And what a couple of our TDs said:

He (local TD) commented that 'sometimes inequality is there to maintain social order'.

Dear (name of supporter), Yes I am reading your submission. I do support marriage equality for same-sex couples. I am pushing the issue in the Dáil. I will send more details later. I will do my best on this important equality matter. If they can do it in Spain we can do it here. Best wishes, T.D.