



MARRIAGEQUALITY

Political Stance – October 2008

FIANNA FAIL OFFICIAL POSITION

Fianna Fail supports the Government's proposed civil partnership scheme.

In Government Fianna Fail established the Colley Group that reviewed the issue of same-sex relationships and concluded that while marriage was the only means of providing equality for lesbian and gay people, current constitutional limitations mean that civil partnership would resolve many issues for same-sex couples .

The then Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD, speaking at the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network in Dublin in April 2006 stated that "All citizens regardless of sexual orientation stand equal in the eyes of our laws...Our laws have changed, and will continue to change, to reflect this principle."

Civil marriage, unions, or partnerships were not mentioned in Fianna Fail's '*Now, the Next Steps*' manifesto for the 2007 General Election. However, the Programme for Government 2007-2012, that they agreed with the Green Party, states that they "will legislate for civil partnerships at the earliest possible date in the lifetime of the Government".

The same section of the Programme for Government also states that the Government is "committed to full equality for all in our society."

Individual Fianna Fail TDs have spoken in favour of civil partnership legislation in the Dail and Seanad in the last 18 months.

Broadly speaking, some TDs and Senators are privately in favour of civil marriage for lesbian and gay people, while others are resolutely opposed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK FIANNA FAIL TDS AND SENATORS

Your party says it is committed to equality for all. Would you agree that civil marriage rights are the only way of providing equality for lesbian and gay people?

What are the obstacles within your own party for supporting civil marriage for lesbian and gay people?

Civil partnership will not provide the same rights and entitlements to lesbian and gay people that are automatically granted to married heterosexual couples. Can you see that this is unfair?

In regard to adoption, lesbian and gay people are merely seeking the right to be considered as adoptive parents - no one is automatically entitled to adopt a child. Does this allay any fears you may have about this important issue?

There are a growing number of countries, EU Member States, and States in the USA that are introducing marriage equality. Do you believe that, as a modern country, Ireland should be at the forefront of social change?

Will you raise this issue with your colleagues, in parliamentary party meetings, and take note of our position in regard to the upcoming debates on the civil partnership legislation?

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FINE GAEL OFFICIAL POSITION

Fine Gael has expressed support for the introduction of civil partnership legislation.

Their current party position – as outlined in their 2007 General Election Manifesto – states they are committed to creating a “Civil partnership Register to allow for two people of the same or opposite sex to formally register their partnership with the State.”

Current Fine Gael Spokesperson on Justice, Charles Flanagan TD, has spoken passionately in the Dail about the need to introduce legal recognition of same-sex couples.

Fine Gael is currently updating its policy in this regard and is openly engaging with MarriagEquality on an ongoing basis. It is likely they will formally endorse the Government’s proposed civil partnership scheme.

QUESTIONS TO ASK FINE GAEL TDS AND SENATORS

Fine Gael is a party committed to equality. In updating your policies regarding same-sex couples, will you provide equality for lesbian and gay people by supporting access to civil marriage?

Will your party support the Government’s civil partnership scheme?

Do you recognise that while civil partnership may suit some same-sex couples, it will not provide equality for lesbian and gay people?

Would you accept that the incremental approach to equality - while it may be politically expedient - is not always correct? Do you think Ireland should follow the Spanish example of introducing marriage equality rather than civil partnerships?

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Will you raise this issue with your colleagues, in parliamentary party meetings, and take note of our position in regard to the upcoming debates on the civil partnership legislation?

GREEN PARTY OFFICIAL POSITION

The Green Party’s official party position supports marriage equality for lesbian and gay people. Despite this fact, whilst in Government they are supporting the proposed Civil Partnership legislation.

The Green Party negotiated the inclusion of a commitment to civil partnership legislation in the agreed Programme for Government 2007-2012 with Fianna Fail.

The Green Party subsequently supported the proposed civil partnership scheme as a step towards marriage equality.

Despite passing a motion at their most recent party conference supporting the introduction of civil partnership, the Green Party have assured MarriagEquality that as a party they are committed to achieving civil marriage for lesbian and gay people.

MarriagEquality continues to meet with senior Green Party representatives on an ongoing basis and will raise our concerns with them about the proposed civil partnership scheme as the legislation proceeds through the Oireachtas.

QUESTIONS TO ASK GREEN PARTY TDS AND SENATORS

Does the Green Party remain fully committed to the introduction of civil marriage for lesbian and gay people?

What influence can the Green Party bring to bear on Government on this important issue?

Will the Green Party include a commitment to civil marriage for lesbian and gay people in your Local and European Election manifestos?

Will the Green Party support a civil partnership scheme even if it is extremely limited and does not provide anywhere near the same rights and entitlements as civil marriage?

Does the Green Party recognise the danger that by introducing civil partnership it may make civil marriage more difficult to achieve in the long run as the issue will be parked for some time once the scheme is introduced?

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LABOUR PARTY OFFICIAL POSITION

The Labour Party is committed to full and unequivocal equality for lesbian and gay couples and is willing to call for a referendum on the issue of same-sex marriage should that be necessary.

Marriage Equality does not believe that a referendum is necessary as this is a matter yet to be decided by the Supreme Court in the Zappone and Gilligan case.

The Labour Party supports the introduction of its Civil Unions Bill.

This Bill provides "a status relationship equivalent to marriage for the benefit of people who are of the same-sex and who, under the current constitutional understanding of marriage, cannot marry each other."

The Labour Bill provides the right for lesbian and gay couples to be considered as adoptive parents.

The Labour Party has said the introduction of civil partnership will not provide equality for lesbian and gay people.

Labour first tabled their Civil Unions Bill in the Dail in February 2007, and again in November 2007. The Bill was defeated by a Government amendment on both occasions.

Labour Party TDs and Senators have been meeting with Marriage Equality on an ongoing basis, at leadership level, and through the Labour LGBT group.

QUESTIONS TO ASK LABOUR PARTY TDs AND SENATORS

Will the Labour Party support the Government's civil partnership scheme?

While we await the outcome of the Zappone/Gilligan Supreme Court appeal, will the Labour Party continue to press for the introduction of marriage for lesbian and gay couples?

Will the Labour party advocate for civil marriage for lesbian and gay couples in their manifestos for the Local and European Elections to keep the focus on the issue?

SINN FEIN OFFICIAL POSITION

Sinn Fein, in the Oireachtas, supports civil marriage for lesbian and gay people.

Sinn Fein supported the Labour Party's Civil Unions Bill when it was introduced in the Dail in February and November 2007.

Sinn Fein has expressed public support for Marriage Equality's work and continues to liaise with the campaign on an ongoing basis.

QUESTIONS TO ASK SINN FEIN TDs AND SENATORS

As a small opposition party, how can Sinn Fein raise this issue in the Dail?

Are there any opportunities for Sinn Fein to table motions in the Dail on the important issue of civil marriage for lesbian and gay people?

Could Sinn Fein use its influence with independent members of the Dail and Seanad to support civil marriage for same-sex couples?