



First Friday News & Views

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*The Monthly Newsletter
of the First Friday
Breakfast Club, Inc.*

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▼ The next FFBC Meeting is 7:00am,
Friday, August 7, 2015, at Hoyt
Sherman Place, 15th & Woodland,
Des Moines, IA

▼ RSVP by August 5 to
JonathanWilson@davisbrownlaw.com,
or phone 515-288-2500

Failing Fifth Grade Government

By Jonathan Wilson

Hearken back to the (at least feigned) furor over the Iowa Supreme Court's unanimous decision legalizing same-sex marriage in the state of Iowa. Exclusively from our Republican "leaders," there were calls for an Iowa Constitutional Amendment that would have created a carve-out from our state constitution's guarantee of equal protection. Such an amendment, if adopted, would have relegated gay Iowans to second class citizenship, in deference to the religion-based position of our detractors, folks that I'd call un-American theocrats. Courageous, actual leaders in the Democratically-controlled Iowa Senate prevented a constitutional amendment vote by the Iowa electorate.

That real leadership saved our state an expensive, contentious fight over nothing of consequence. Nothing of consequence because, even at that time, every insightful human being, on either side of the issue, knew that the legality or illegality of same-sex marriage would ultimately be decided by the United States Supreme Court interpreting the United States Constitution.

Such a SCOTUS decision would trump (and has trumped) every anti-same-sex marriage statute, state or federal, and every similar provision written into any state constitution. It's elementary civics that, in the United States, citizens derive rights under both their state constitution and the United States Constitution. The two can diverge, but only if a differing provision of a state constitution affords *greater* rights than found in the United States Constitution. It shouldn't be necessary to write this paragraph for anyone who has mastered fifth grade government class. We have a *constitutional* democracy that does, and is meant to, constrain the mentality of a mob.

Our detractors claimed, accurately, that the United States Constitution is silent on the definition of marriage. Fair enough; and it has been a subject of debate in legislatures and on ballot initiatives in the several states, with varying outcomes. The United States Constitution, however, does say a great deal about equality, and it doesn't take a linguist or a legal scholar to understand that "equal" means, and should mean, equal.

Using "marriage" as shorthand for access to myriad rights and privileges, both state and federal, created the fatal constitutional flaw in state-level definitions of marriage as exclusively a union of one man and one woman.

Admittedly, marriage was, in recent history, restricted to one man and one woman. But the nature of marriage has *Continued on p. 2*

been changing culturally. It ceased to be a property transaction. It ceased to be an arranged institution. It ceased to be confined to couples who shared a religious affiliation. It ceased to be restricted to people of the same race. It had largely ceased to be a sacred life commitment, partly thanks to state laws that moved to no-fault divorce. Some of the most vocal opponents of gay marriage have been married and divorced multiple times. It's a paradox of monumental proportions that gay people have felt a growing reverence for the institution and want access to it, while they have been opposed by people who have sullied the institution by not living the marital commitment ideal and claiming that married gay people will diminish its sacred character. Poppycock.

The evolving cultural understanding of marriage, coupled with gay citizens exiting the closet to reveal long-standing, committed relationships, changed hearts and minds, and created a climate in which five enlightened members of the United States Supreme Court could do the right thing. They could recognize that "equal" means equal. They could recognize that "united" states could not be a reality if our citizens could not make a cross-country road trip without their fundamental rights changing every time they cross a state line. They could interpret the United States Constitution in a way that keeps faith with reality in the 21st Century.

There are those who recoil at the thought that SCOTUS is charged under our system of government with interpreting the US Constitution, and that SCOTUS can and should do so consistent with changing circumstances. The US Constitution says, for example, that the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy. It's as silent about the Air Force as it is about the definition of marriage.

The aftermath of the Supreme Court's gay marriage decision has exposed a bunch of people, some of whom are declared candidates for President, who have not mastered the subject matter of fifth grade government class. They should be embarrassed.

But hearken back again to the aftermath of the Iowa Supreme Court

decision on gay marriage and the Republican calls for an amendment to the Iowa Constitution. Since virtually every discerning citizen on both sides of the issue knew that the legality of gay marriage would ultimately be decided by the United States Supreme Court, the calls for a state-level constitutional amendment must have been motivated by some other, unspoken objective. Maybe Republicans who advocated for such an amendment -- which, if adopted, would have changed nothing -- just maybe they were cynically trying to pander to and manipulate their political base in order to raise money, turn out voters, and gain power. Actually, that's not speculation; it's a certainty. And it's a certainty that the antics of anti-gay marriage presidential candidates, and anti-gay marriage rhetoric, are similarly motivated.

Briefs & Shorts

Be sure to RSVP for the August 7 meeting no later than August 5. Contact Jonathan at 288-2500 or email JonathanWilson@DavisBrownLaw.com. Our scheduled speaker will be the new President of Drake University, Marty Martin.

Thanks to Scott Kuknyo for his introduction of our July speaker, Des Moines Police Chief Dana Wingert.

The annual FFBC - Pros picnic will be Saturday, July 25, 7-10 pm at the home of Michael Thompson and Allen Vander Linden, 7500 Benton Drive, Urbandale. From the ice arena at 73rd and Hickman, go north about 1/4 mile to Benton Drive; west on Benton Drive to 7500; 2 story brick on south side of the street. Or go to www.mapquest.com for directions.

Save the Dates: 23rd Annual Red Hot Party in support of The Project, Thursday August 6, 2015, 6:30-8:00, ISBA Headquarters, 625 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines. Honorees: Rekha Basu and York Taenzer.

ACLU of Iowa 80th Birthday Bash, October 2, 2015, 5:30-8:00, World Food Prize Building, Des Moines. Cost \$70 per person. Call 243-3988 for tickets.



Handsome, Enlightened and Smart: What are the Odds

By Bruce Carr

Our guest speaker on Friday morning, July 3, was Des Moines' new Chief of Police, Dana Wingert, who was appointed to the post last February. Wingert's persuasive, informed, and personable style of communication was clearly evident as he demonstrated his pride in –and enjoyment of – his department and the city it serves.

Noting that the department had been somewhat “on hold” while the search for a new chief was undertaken after Chief Judy Bradshaw announced her intention to retire in February 2014, he said he'd just now begun to assemble and

promote new officers in his staff. Most important to his department's work, he insisted, is the community involvement of his officers: he wants to see all of them, for example, working as board members of community agencies such as Youth Emergency Services & Shelter (YESS). It's essential, he urged, that local citizens and business owners know the names and contact info of the individual officers assigned to their neighborhoods.

Asked about the issue of body-cameras, Wingert hoped for a careful approach to how access to the resultant video-tapes is handled. He will certainly listen to all the relevant stake-holders (such as the ACLU) as the community wrestles with such concerns as privacy. And his compassion as a public servant shone through as he asked pointedly, “Do you really want to see the worst moment in your life broadcast to the world on YouTube?”

Dana Wingert is a native of Wesley (Kossuth County), Iowa, and a graduate of Corwith-Wesley-LuVerne High School. He obtained an associate degree from DMACC after joining the Des Moines police department in December 1991, and later earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Grand View University. He is a graduate of the FBI's executive training program at Boston University. A 24-year veteran of the department, he was promoted to senior police officer after three years' service and moved steadily through the ranks of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain, before reaching major in 2011.

On his appointment as chief in 2015, he said that “today, our department serves a population of over 207,500, on a budget of \$58 million. As the largest police department in the state, our 376 sworn officers and 109 civilian support staff are dedicated to providing professional, efficient police service to those living in and visiting our award-winning city. Our department has received several national and state awards for its work in civil rights, domestic violence, child abuse investigation, and executive leadership. My staff and I do our best to create an environment that fosters excellent performance by our many talented employees. I am proud of the work the men and women of this department do for the citizens of this community, and I am honored to serve as their chief of police.” Chief Wingert lives with his wife and three children in the Southern Hills neighborhood of Des Moines. He can be contacted by email at policechief@dmgov.org.

Ponder This

The Dalai Lama, when asked what surprised him most about humanity, answered, “Man. Because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived.”

If you put off doing something for somebody because you can't do something for everybody, you'll end up doing nothing for anybody.

Work for a cause and not for applause.

*There are about 33,830 “Christian” denominations in the world. Almost certainly, none of them have it all figured out exactly right, but they've been able to identify that many differences considered sufficiently important to maintain a separate denomination. If you attended one of their worship services weekly, it would take you over 650 years to visit them all. If, from the day of your birth, you visited a different one of them **every single day**, you'd have to live to be 99 to visit them all. With more of them popping up all the time, you'd never visit all of them and, just your luck, you'd die just before visiting that one that has it all figured out accurately. Not worth the effort.*





EDUCATION VETO IS BAD FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Governor's veto of funding for our schools, community colleges and state universities will result in higher tuition, more kids in classrooms and fewer educational opportunities for students.

Iowa's improving economy makes it possible to do more for our students and schools. The state has a billion dollars in savings, but as support for our public schools has become divided along party lines, Iowa's investment has dropped to \$1,600 less per student than the national average.

I was proud during the 2015 session to join bipartisan efforts to boost student achievement and keep college affordable for working families. Legislators negotiated for months on K-12 funding before reaching a compromise that provided an additional \$56 million for our schools this fall.

Governor Branstad's veto of that funding means districts will receive a 1.25 percent increase over last year. That's not enough to keep up with inflation, let alone make up for several lean years since the recession. Such a meager increase has already resulted in more than 1,000 pink slips for Iowa teachers.

When our students graduate from high school, opportunities for college and job training should be as affordable as possible. Taking on massive debt is another roadblock to achieving success, to strengthening our middle class and to growing our economy.

We had hoped to freeze tuition for resident undergrads at our state universities for a record third straight year. The Legislature also provided funding to keep tuition costs down at our 15 community colleges, the first place many Iowans go for job training, college credit and continuing education. The Governor's veto means students will likely see a bigger tuition increase during the upcoming school year.

We can invest in education at all levels and balance the budget responsibly. Educational opportunity is key to Iowa's economic growth, and economic opportunity is directly related to education funding. It creates a positive cycle that helps our state attract businesses and jobs—the types that will strengthen Iowa's middle class.

Additional information

This is a legislative update from Senator Matt McCoy, representing west part of Des Moines, portions of West Des Moines and Cumming in northwest Warren County. For newsletters, photos and further information, go to www.senate.iowa.gov/senator/mccoy.

To contact Senator McCoy during the week, call the Senate Switchboard at 515-281-3371. Otherwise he can be reached at home at 515-274-0561. E-mail him at matt.mccoy@legis.iowa.gov.

A Location Review

CAMP NCN

By Gary Kaufman



Having noticed their brochure in one of our local emporiums, I decided to spend the Independence Day weekend at Camp NCN, just north of Black River, Wisconsin. For what could say freedom more than being naked at what they bill as “America’s Only Sexual Freedom Campground?” The camp has different themes for different weekends. Some are restricted to only heterosexual couples and single women, others are for gay and bisexual men only,

some are non-sexual, and this weekend it was open for all lifestyles. It was the weekend of the 2015 Sex Games which definitely seemed to have a heterosexual tilt. They had a variety of activities and competitions involving a lot of nudity, sexual parts, and sexual functions. See me for some scintillating particulars.

The camp features a surprisingly good café on the grounds with a great gay waiter. He was looking forward for Man-camp in August. The Fourth of July weekend event had dancing at night with a bar, tables, dance floor, stage, and a dark curtained section in the back where fantasies could supposedly be fulfilled. The campgrounds also have a pond for swimming, some cabins around the pond, lots of room for enormous RVs, as well as lots of primitive camping sites for tents.

The owners and workers were very friendly and a lot of fun with great attitudes toward everyone and all lifestyles. However, readers of the First Friday Breakfast Club Newsletter would probably enjoy a weekend limited to gay and bisexual men the most. If anyone is interested, Man-camp is August 6th – 9th, and the camp is a 5-hour trip from Des Moines, Interstate highway almost all of the way. You can check out that event at www.man-camp.org or all of the events at Camp NCN at www.campncn.com.



Washington looks a helluva lot better in full color.

FFBC

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Des Moines, Iowa

August, 2015

*First Friday
Breakfast Club*

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Newsletter

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MADE ON A  MAC

MY M.O. (MONTHLY OBSERVATIONS)

The View From Planet Windsor

By Steve Person

Catherine Mayer's **Born To Be King: Prince Charles on Planet Windsor** focuses on a man who is, perhaps, the most interesting member of Britain's royal family. While most of us are saddled with a first, middle, and last name, Prince Charles's full name is His royal Highness Prince Charles Philip Arthur George, Prince of Wales, Royal Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, Extra Knight of the Most Ancient Noble Order of the Thistle, Grand Master and Principal Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Member of the Order of Merit, Knight of the Order of Australia, Companion of the Queen's Service Order, Member of Her Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Aide-de-Camp, Earl of Chester, Duke of Cornwall, Duke of Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, Prince and Great Steward of Scotland. Try putting all that on the signature line of a check! Despite these grand titles and honors, Charles is a man who cannot achieve his reason for being until his mother dies. What a weight to carry at the back of one's mind!

Mayer states in her introduction, "This biography is written in the belief that concealment neither benefits the institution whose future relies on him nor serves the needs of the democracies of which it is a constitutional pillar." The author followed the Prince on a typical day in his schedule. This particular day began at his farmhouse in Wales, continued to the town of Treharris where he met and spoke with the local butcher in his shop, proceeded to Cardiff at the Roath Lock Studios where the BBC sci-fi series **Doctor Who** is filmed, pushed on to the Ebbw Fawr Learning Community, and finally ended his day where it began, at his Welsh farm, Llwynwermud.

Charles is patron to a host of charities, many of his own design. Of these, high in priority is The Prince's Trust, an organization that focuses attention on at-risk youth and provides job training and life skills to succeed in a student's chosen area of interest. Alternately, the Prince is an avid advocate of a greener world and practices organic farming at his Gloucestershire home, Highgrove House.

He is a man intensely interested in preserving the best of Britain's past, keenly illustrated by his ongoing efforts to rehabilitate Dumfries House and gardens in Scotland. Mayer describes Dumfries as "the most important surviving early work of architect Robert Adam."

Charles is a man who can incite intense criticism of his views on everything from contemporary architecture to climate change. Yet this less-than-glamorous eldest child of the Queen is capable of sweeping even the most successful of Britain's theatrical class off her feet. Said actress Emma Thompson: "He's a great dancer. He's the best dancer. Not disco-dancing. Proper dancing. I've never danced with anyone who can actually lead me and I can relax and go -- this is great, this is better than sex. He's a very charismatic dancer."

Mayer concludes, "The Prince is a man with a mission, a knight on a quest. His overarching goals—saving his adopted planet and the monarchy—underpin pretty much everything he does and are sometimes at odds with each other."