

Lord Deben
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

5th June 2013

Dear Lord Deben,

I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you and thank you for your recent speech in the House of Lords supporting the Marriage (Same sex couples) Bill at 2nd Reading and accompanying vote.

Like many I was watching the live-stream of the debate and joining in conversation and discussion over Twitter. Unfortunately, just before your speech, Twitter experienced some technical problems and, for half an hour, we were unable to access the service and provide the ongoing commentary. As Twitter discussions, especially for an ongoing issue, tend towards the immediate with the past consigned to the past unless it hits a nerve, it is to your credit that when service was resumed about twenty minutes after you had finished, you were getting (delayed) praise for your speech.

I was particularly pleased to hear your comments on the difference between Civil Partnerships and marriage and your reason for voting against Civil Partnerships. I recognise the protection that Civil Partnerships gave for same sex couples but have always considered them to be an insult to the idea of equality.

I was therefore disappointed that the government decided to ignore the desires expressed by the majority of consultation respondents that Civil Partnerships should be reformed to produce equality in that system. In so doing the government allowed an amendment seeking to equalise civil partnerships to be turned into an effective 'wrecking' amendment and prevented the possibility of a more equal system. I am however pleased that they have agreed to look into this with some urgency and, should such an amendment (that is not intended to 'wreck' the bill) or bill be put forward that you will continue to support moves towards further equality.

Although I do not profess a faith, I get very distressed by the conflation in popular media between the leadership and the congregation which then posits this debate as **all** religious versus the non-religious. It is therefore wonderful to see religious voices such as yours speaking out for secular equality. I am also happy to see you recognise that religious considerations are not universal and should not be applied to secular society.

Again, I would like to express my most sincere thanks and hope that you continue to support this bill and future equality legislation.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Lambert