

## Election Brings New Leadership to Washington/Lansing

As a result of the 2008 election, the Democratic party will have control of the executive and legislative branches of the federal government in 2009. In an historic event, the nation elected its first African-American president. Democrats gained seats in the U.S. House and Senate, including two seats from Michigan - District 7 (won by Mark Schauer) and District 13 (won by Gary Peters).



Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Cliff Taylor was ousted from his position and both ballot proposals passed.

Michigan Family Forum once again distributed its popular, non-partisan Voter Guide.

More than 500,000 printed copies were distributed across the state with the help of over 1,000 volunteers and 2,000 churches. The online version registered more hits than ever

before, meaning that potentially more than one million Michigan voters used the Guide in some capacity.

“MFF will continue to promote policies designed to strengthen the family in Michigan. We look forward to working with the new members of the Legislature to advance a bi-partisan, pro-family agenda over the next two years,” said Michigan Family Forum Executive Director Brad Snavely.

In the state-level races, Democrats gained nine seats in the House and won all races for state university boards.

*“Thank you very much for putting together the voters guide for the upcoming election! ... I never would have had the time to research all the candidates’ positions and attitudes toward this most fundamental question of their leadership ability. Your guide helped me pick out the candidates who have proven track records for life, so I can be sure to vote without remorse later... So thank you and GOD BLESS YOU ALL for a job well done!” -Macomb County Voter*

## MFF Releases New Policy Briefs



Two new research documents are now available to help educate lawmakers and the public about family policy issues.

“Does Marriage Education Work?” authored by Christina Pisani, a Blackstone Fellow with the Alliance Defense Fund, analyzes various government and organization-sponsored marriage education

programs to gauge their effectiveness. “The Taxpayer Burden of Family Fragmentation,” authored by Nate King, summer intern at MFF, summarizes the staggering cost to taxpayers of programs implemented to deal with the breakdown of the family.

Both briefs are available at MFF’s website, or use the enclosed response card to request a printed copy.

## 2009 Initiatives

- Parental Rights Legislation
- Healthy Marriage Initiative
- Reducing Out-of-Wedlock Births
- Project Open Arms Adoption Initiative
- Michigan Association for Sexual Health

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“...given that the marriage amendment prohibits the recognition of unions similar to marriage ‘for any purpose,’ the pertinent question is not whether these unions give rise to all of the same legal effects; rather, it is whether these unions are being recognized as unions similar to marriage ‘for any purpose.’ Recognizing this and concluding that these unions are indeed being recognized as similar unions ‘for any purpose,’ the Court of Appeals reversed.\* We affirm its judgment. That is, we conclude that the marriage amendment, which states that ‘the union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose,’ prohibits public employers from providing health insurance benefits to their employees’ qualified same-sex domestic partners.”

—Michigan Supreme Court  
Majority Opinion in “National  
Pride at Work v. Granholm”

\*The Michigan Court of Appeals reversed a lower court decision in 2005 which ruled that the marriage amendment did NOT prohibit public employer benefits for same-sex domestic partners.

## THE FORUM

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If you would like more information about Michigan Family Forum, or if you know of other people who would like a free subscription to THE FORUM, please call our office or visit our website.

BRAD SNAVELY  
Executive Director  
DAN JARVIS  
Research and Public Policy  
JON STANTON  
Office Manager, Editor  
STEFAN HULL  
Staff Assistant, Layout  
BECKY KEILEN  
Staff Assistant

© 2008  
Michigan Family Forum  
PO Box 15216  
Lansing, MI 48901-5216  
Phone: (517) 374-1171  
www.michiganfamily.org

## Michigan Supreme Court Rules on Same-Sex Benefits

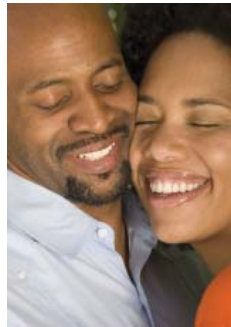
The Michigan Supreme Court has determined Michigan’s voter-approved marriage amendment prohibits public employers from offering benefits based on domestic partnerships which simulate marriage.

Michigan Family Forum in cooperation with the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) filed a Friend of the Court brief in cases at the appellate and Supreme Court levels.

“We think the Court’s ruling is absolutely correct,” said MFF Executive Director Brad Snavely. “Nearly 60-percent of voters approved the amendment in 2004. Furthermore, 30,000 volunteers collected 500,000 signatures within three months time to ensure that this issue was put before the voters. The language, which was printed on the ballot, was clear and Michigan voters gave overwhelming support to this amendment.”

## Three More States Vote to Protect Marriage

Marriage was definitely one of the winners in this year’s election. Three states - Arizona, Florida and California - had marriage amendments on the ballot, and all three successfully passed.



The most hotly contested race was in California, where the State Supreme Court had mandated same-sex marriage earlier this year. Voters there passed a constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman by a vote of 52-percent to 48-percent. Same-sex marriage advocates have challenged the election results in Court in an attempt to override

the will of the people. It remains unclear whether the same-sex marriages performed in California since the Supreme Court’s ruling will remain valid.

The support for marriage in Arizona and Florida was even stronger. Arizona voters passed their amendment 56-percent to 44-percent, and the Florida amendment passed with a vote of 62-percent to 38-percent.

In California, pollsters say that the high turnout of African-American voters, who overwhelmingly voted to protect the definition of marriage, played a key role in the amendment’s success. This is despite the fact that the same voters largely cast their ballots for many elected officials, including President-Elect Barack Obama, who opposed the amendment.

## New Report Shows Importance of Faith and Family

A new survey jointly released by Michigan Family Forum and the Family Research Council, shows that young people who live with both biological parents and attend religious services regularly are less likely to have problems at school and home. Data from the National Survey of Children’s Health shows that these children are five times less likely to repeat a grade and less likely to have behavior problems at home and school.

“Not only is this great news for children,” said Brad Snavely, Family Forum’s Executive Director, “but the parents of these children were also found to have lower stress levels and

a healthier parent-child relationship than parents whose children did not have these benefits.” This latest study reinforces scores of previous studies that show the importance of family structure, namely healthy marriages, for children. “While there are always exceptions,” Snavely said, “it’s gratifying to know that two self-satisfying activities, loving your spouse and attending religious services, can have such a profound impact on your child’s well-being.”

The study is available on MFF’s website at [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org) or call (517) 374-1171 to request a printed copy.

## MASH Plans First State-Wide Conference

Last year, Michigan Family Forum joined several other groups in creating the Michigan Association for Sexual Health (MASH) in order to more effectively promote the abstinence message in Michigan. The mission is to unify and empower individuals and organizations that promote youth sexual health and the prevention of risky behaviors. "We are excited to know that a more professional, coordinated effort will be made when advocating for abstinence," said Dan Jarvis, chair of MASH's board of directors and policy director at Michigan Family Forum.

Throughout 2008, Sara Keeler, MASH president, has shepherded the organization through the legal process of incorporating and applying for non-profit status, develop-

ment of a website and the creation of an advisory board of professionals interested in promoting abstinence. MASH is planning a summit for abstinence education supporters in March.



"We're starting small for our first conference," said Keeler, "but we know there is a huge demand to learn how to effectively get a positive, healthy message to our young people regarding sexual activity." Conference sessions include: marketing abstinence programs on the Internet, new Michigan sex education regulations, and medical updates. To register for the March 29 summit, visit MASH's website at [www.misexualhealth.org](http://www.misexualhealth.org) or call Michigan Family Forum at (517) 374-1171.

## Churches Observe Adoption Month

University Reformed Church in East Lansing recently hosted an Adoption Awareness Night for 65 members of the congregation. The evening helped those interested in adoption find the information they need to move forward. Coordinator Stefan Hull pulled together representatives from three adoption organizations who gave short presentations on several different types of adoption. According to Hull, "we were able to hear about several forms of adoption and foster care from experts in those areas. It was a simple format, with plenty of time left for specific questions. Many people have a hard time moving from desire to action because they don't have basic

information. It was important to me to break through this barrier."

If you would like to host a similar evening for your congregation, it can be as easy as a few phone calls to coordinate representatives from area adoption agencies, booking a room at the church, some light refreshments and a few announcements to get the word out. Project Open Arms, a joint effort between MFF and Bethany Christian Services, is glad to help coordinate an Adoption Awareness Night at your church. Contact MFF at (517) 374-1171 if you are interested.

## Dr. Bill Maier Speaks to West Michigan Pastors

MFF was pleased to host a special Pastor's Appreciation Breakfast in Grand Rapids in October with Focus on the Family's Dr. Bill Maier. Pastors and church leaders gathered to hear Dr. Maier's inspiring message and to find out about how current public policy issues affect the family.



Dr. Maier shared an insightful Power Point presentation titled "Kids at Risk," that is available for use by your pastor or church. Contact Michigan Family Forum at (517) 374-1171, or send us an email, [info@michiganfamily.org](mailto:info@michiganfamily.org) to request a copy.

## Stay Informed!



The FORUM ONLINE weekly email gives you a brief update on family-related issues.



The FORUM FLASH special alerts keep you informed on the latest legislative issues and gives you a quick and easy way to contact your local leaders.

To participate in these informative services, register in the Action Center on our website. Your information is confidential and will not be sold or distributed to outside parties.

[www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org)

## In Season of Change, Marriage Endures

By almost any measure, 2008 was a year marked by tremendous economic, cultural and especially political change. Those running for public office tried to position themselves as the “candidate of change.”

For advocates seeking to change the definition of marriage, it seemed the perfect time to defeat marriage amendments in California, Florida and Arizona. In each case, there was reason for optimism on their part. The California Supreme Court had already mandated same-sex marriage and many expected this liberal state to affirm its decision. As for Arizona, voters there had just rejected a similar amendment in 2006. Finally, in Florida, voters would need a 60 percent super majority to adopt their marriage amendment – a tough task for any ballot proposal.



When the votes were counted, marriage prevailed in all three states – getting over 52 percent of the vote in California, 56 percent in Arizona and 62

percent in Florida! These were stunning victories given the circumstances. There are now 30 states (including Michigan) where citizens have voted on such amendments and all 30 have been adopted. Contrary

to what you may read or hear, preserving marriage is a winning issue across the country.

Why? A strong majority of Americans still understand that marriage is more than just a personal relationship – it also has an important public purpose. As author Kay Hymowitz puts it, “marriage is both a voluntary union between two partners and an arrangement for rearing the next generation of self-reliant citizens.” If we ever lose sight of this aspect of the institu-

tion, our society will ultimately become less stable and more reliant on government.

That’s why we’re so committed to strengthening and defending the family in Michigan. Our goals for 2009 are focused on seeing more children raised in homes with a married mom and dad. This will mean standing against efforts to redefine the family, upholding parental rights, promoting adoption and encouraging healthy marriages. These are often unpopular positions in today’s culture, but they are critically important to our state and worthy of our best efforts.

I hope you will join us in this important work. In order to be successful, we will need the continued prayers, involvement and financial support from friends like you. Thank you in advance for your partnership!

*Brad Snavely*

*Brad Snavely  
Executive Director*

### MFF needs your support

Michigan Family Forum is a 501c3 organization funded by tax-deductible donations from involved, caring people like you. If you can help financially support MFF’s efforts to strengthen families in Michigan, please return the enclosed donation card with your contribution or give us a call at (800) 644-9111.

MFF also offers an on-line giving option. Visit [www.michiganfamily.org](http://www.michiganfamily.org) and click on the Mastercard/Visa logo.

### Marriage and Singles Retreats



Michigan Family Forum is working with the Michigan Healthy Marriage Coalition to conduct retreats for couples and singles in Wayne, Jackson and Lenawee counties. If you attend a church in one of those counties and would like to have a healthy relationship retreat at your church, contact Dan Jarvis at (517) 374-1171.

### Thank-you, Nate!

Nate King served as a summer intern at Michigan Family Forum, completing a Policy Brief on the Taxpayer Burden of Family Fragmentation. Thank you for your hard work, Nate!

