

Deseret Morning News, Wednesday, November 23, 2005

North S.L. shrugs at family resolution

Council says message from group doesn't reflect reality of the city

By Nicole Warburton and Deborah Bulkeley

Deseret Morning News

NORTH SALT LAKE — A message the Sutherland Institute is sending across the state, affirming traditional families, doesn't reflect the "makeup or reality" of this Davis County city.

The North Salt Lake City Council on Tuesday didn't even vote on a resolution saying the "natural family" is the fundamental unit of society and deserves protection by state and local government.

"We envision a local culture that upholds the marriage of a woman to a man, and a man to a woman, as ordained of God," the resolution stated in part. "This culture affirms marriage as the best path to health, security, fulfillment and joy."

Councilman Conrad Jacobson said the resolution "sounds good, but it doesn't reflect the makeup or the reality of North Salt Lake. We want to include everyone in the city."

The resolution had been added to the agenda for discussion by Mayor Kay Briggs.

"I think people have a right to talk about anything they want to talk about," Briggs said. "No one came before us dressed in either black or white saying let's push this thing through."

Paul Mero, president of the Sutherland Institute, said the conservative issues group sent the resolution to every city and county council in the state as a vision statement.

"We filter policy through this type of vision, and we're hoping the councils would also filter their policies through that kind of vision," he said.

He said he wasn't disappointed the council turned it down, saying, "It was just an opportunity they had to reflect on an idea."

The resolution is leading up to a March 29 Utah regional meeting of the World Congress of

Families, he said. So far, Mero has heard that Mapleton and West Valley City officials also will take it up for discussion.

Mero said the resolution isn't meant to be exclusive of any families.

"It's not a negative vision, it's an affirmation in public policy dealing with the family," he said. "Even though we all tend to live with less than the ideal, I don't think we should give up on the ideal."

Dale Elton, 70, told council members the resolution "stinks" and that he would be an unnatural resident of North Salt Lake if it passed.

"The natural family is something that should be left to the families themselves," he said. "The government has no right to interfere."

Mike Thompson, executive director of the gay rights advocacy group Equality Utah, said by voting down the measure the council sent a "wonderful recognition of the diversity of families."

The resolution, which only recognized families with a husband and wife, excluded other families such as adoptive families and those headed by single parents or same-sex couples, he said.

"These other families are valuable, contributing members of the North Salt Lake community," he said. "It's regrettable that such a proposal would even be considered."

Council members were applauded by three members of Equality Utah.

Jacobson said council members received several e-mails in response to the resolution, and some weren't nice. He said the fact it was presented didn't mean it would pass.

The resolution was the latest in a growing debate over traditional marriage. Last November, Utah voters approved a state constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage and any other "substantially similar" relationship.

Salt Lake Mayor Rocky Anderson recently issued an executive order extending benefits to gay and unmarried heterosexual couples and their children. The city's insurance company is waiting on a court decision before extending benefits.
