

Some marriage equality links

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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Last week I [joined the chorus](#) of those who wished for a bit more from the president's endorsement of same-sex marriage. Among those who were more unambiguously enthusiastic, I found [E. J. Graff's later post](#) pretty compelling:

Others think that Obama should have said that same-sex marriage is a fundamental right, and should push for every state to immediately gender-neutralize its marriage rules—and if they don't, the president should urge either Congress or the Supreme Court to force them to do so.

I disagree—strongly—on policy, tactical, and political grounds.

First, the policy. Marriage *is* a state issue. It always has been, under the Tenth Amendment. Each state writes its own laws of marriage and divorce—who can marry and divorce, and on what terms. . . . You may think that's appalling, and that *your* idea of appropriate marriage should be imposed on every American, but well, so does the conservative American Family Association. That's the system. And I like this system. . . . We can scarcely agree, as a country, on a president. Getting South Carolina, Texas, Ohio, and Vermont to agree on how to define and run marriage? Ha. On same-sex marriage, *most states just aren't there yet*.

Here's the truth: If we had *national* marriage laws, I would not be married right now.

She goes on to make the good point that challenges to the Defense of Marriage Act also rely on the idea that marriage is up to the states, not the feds. Of course, none of this is really a policy argument per se--it's about tactics and politics, about how to best *get to* a policy of equal marriage rights. Still, starting as she does from the state-focused system that is--rather than from whatever should be--Graff is persuasive.

Graff also gets into how marriage generally has changed, and how its current social role makes it more conducive to including same-sex couples than it used to be. For more on that see Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, who make the case for same-sex marriage based on not civil rights or other moral principles but [on economics](#).

Then there's [this poll data from Pew](#): it turns out only a fourth of Americans say that Obama's announcement last week makes them see him less favorably, and they're mostly folks who wouldn't have voted for him anyway. So the president may be right on the politics here after all.