

## Don't They Know There's A War On?

If there is one respect in which President Bush is not serious about the war, it is his support for an irrational and divisive Constitutional amendment preventing States from legalising gay marriage.

If there is one respect in which the **Log Cabin Republicans** and **Andrew Sullivan** are not serious about the war, it is their belief that the issue of gay marriage should be a factor in a reasonable voter's choice for President in the forthcoming election.

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## Don't You Know There's A Democracy On?

If there is one respect in which **The World** is not serious about democracy, it is their belief that issues such as gay marriage should not be a factor in a reasonable voter's choice for President in the forthcoming election.

Whether or not it should be a *decisive* factor is a different question.

The Log Cabin Republicans have not endorsed Kerry. They have merely withheld their endorsement of Bush. They have criticised Kerry's positions on these issues as well. And, they have repeated their support of the president's strategy for winning the war on terror.

Bush has clearly decided on the strategy of encouraging the turnout of anti-gay bigots by pursuing this horrible agenda. He seems indifferent to any criticisms that do not affect his re-election prospects; so, that's the type of criticism the Log Cabin Republicans have decided to pursue. Bush's policy deserves effective criticism, and this is their way of giving it.

If we are supposed to suspend criticism of politicians (in a way they care about) during wartime, then there will always be a war and there will seldom be progress.

And, we will have lost what we sought to defend.

**Gil**

by **Gil** on Thu, 09/09/2004 - 16:08 | [reply](#)

**What's a decisive factor?**

What is a non-decisive factor in a choice, and why do non-decisive factors matter?

by a reader on Thu, 09/09/2004 - 18:36 | [reply](#)

## one not like the other

Agree that both are silly. Disagree about how much.

The marriage amendment is (probably - I don't actually know the details of whatever dead-letter amendment (R)s are pretending (for their supporters' sake) is currently on the table) a horrible idea. Bush is wrong for advocating it. It's correct to lament the needless, and pointless, division of the country this engenders, particularly in wartime when division is most harmful.

However... well, in slight defense, Presidents cannot be expected to refrain from all non-war-related proposals "because there's a war on". Bush is the President and as such has done many other things (signing prescription drug bill, cutting ribbons, etc), some good some bad, which have nothing to do with the war - and rightly so. Of each one you could probably say "doesn't he know there's a war on?" but this doesn't really work as an independent criticism in its own right. If Bush favoring this amendment is wrong it's wrong because the amendment is wrong (which I tend to agree it is), not "because there's a war on". But Gil is right in this regard, you don't just suspend democratic politics and debate.

It might be added that the amendment (correct me if I'm wrong) isn't going anywhere at all, and Bush's "favoring" of it seems (from what I can tell) to be limited to spending perhaps less than a grand total of 20 minutes all told *talking about it* (i.e. saying the words "I support a federal marriage amendment..") in perhaps a handful of speeches. It's doubtful therefore that the war that's "on" has been hampered or even affected in any way by his doing so, apart from the needless-divisiveness as I've conceded above.

Of course, the divisiveness is needless in more than one sense, because the people who are all up in arms and angered by the not-going-anywhere, silly, political-posturing amendment (e.g. **The World**), *could* choose to just look past it and ignore it, recognizing it as a political stunt. You know, because it's not going anywhere - and because there's a war on. This brings us to Sullivan...

And Sullivan's position by contrast is just pure unadulterated 100% foolishness, with no saving grace. To believe in the "war on terror" or whatever you call it, and think it's important, and think that Bush is the superior candidate for leading it (all of which, I gather, Sullivan seems to have, at least purportedly), but then decide to favor the other guy solely because (as far as anyone can tell) of a stupid frickin' gay-marriage amendment that ain't going anywhere in the first place, is just beyond belief. I don't even see how it's possible without being disingenuous or deluded somewhere along the way.

--Blix

## Sullivan

Has Sullivan said he endorses Kerry, or just that he can't endorse Bush?

I know it's a weird distinction, but people are weird about elections and voting.

To some people, endorsing and voting is the same as expressing which of the candidates you would prefer to win.

But, to others it means expressing an alignment of core values; and if one can't do that with any candidate, he can't bring himself to endorse or vote for any of them.

I suspect that Sullivan is in the latter group.

I also suspect that he would really prefer that Bush win the election, but doesn't want to dirty himself by explicitly aligning himself with Bush. But, I could be wrong about that.

I tend to think that this position isn't really a bad one for a "reasonable voter" to take, since his individual vote will almost certainly not determine the outcome of the election.

It might be an unreasonable position for a popular and influential pundit to take, though.

## Gil

by [Gil](#) on Thu, 09/09/2004 - 20:14 | [reply](#)

## either way

Whether he has endorsed Kerry, or just "can't endorse" Bush, this would be a marked change from earlier writings, and although no one (besides him, perhaps) can say for sure, it seems to appear to most observers (I'm not much of a regular AS reader anymore BTW) that the primary spark driving this shift is the gay-marriage issue. And IF the gay-marriage issue has indeed shifted Sullivan in that direction as is popularly supposed, then given what his purported position on "war on terror" related things has always seemed to be, it is profoundly silly of him.

note: a quick search found [this article](#) where Sullivan says "I may not find myself the only conservative moving slowly and reluctantly toward the notion that Kerry may be the right man - and the conservative choice - for a difficult and perilous time." Not clear what to make of this, it's not "I endorse Kerry!" but neither is it "I can endorse neither". From here it appears as if he kinda-sorta wants to endorse Kerry while leaving wiggle room. And if so, this is a change, and the reason for that change seems to be.... well, see previous paragraph.

## Decisiveness

I was trying to make the distinction between something being "a factor" and being so compelling as to change one's final decision. I think that many things should be "a factor" for a reasonable voter, and perhaps the aggregation of enough of these factors might be sufficient to change the decision, but no individual factor would be.

For example, perhaps Bush's support for the Federal Marriage Amendment on its own is insufficient to cause a reasonable voter to change his vote. But, when combined with many other factors, perhaps a picture emerges of a man with sufficient character and judgment flaws that it could persuade a reasonable voter that the man is insufficiently reliable to be President, or that the future benefits of punishing this bad, unprincipled, behavior justifies the costs of accepting an inferior wartime President.

I'm not claiming that the above is true. But it's conceivable. And, thus, considering this position to be a factor does not prove that a reasonable voter is insufficiently serious about the war.

**Gil**

by **Gil** on Thu, 09/09/2004 - 21:38 | [reply](#)

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