

The Jackson Jive

by Richard J. Rosendall

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Despite his being so dark and masculine, I am tempted to call Bishop Harry Jackson the White Queen after the character in "Through the Looking-Glass" who sometimes "believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." Whether or not Jackson really believes the things he says, he deserves credit for having the chutzpah to champion District of Columbia residents' right to vote at the same time he is urging Congress to interfere with the decisions of those voters' representatives.

Some sympathy may be in order, since Jackson is losing his crusade to defend God and little children from gay people's right to marry. Beginning at 8:30 a.m. on or about March 3 (after the D.C. marriage equality bill completes its congressional review), same-sex couples will be able to go to Room 4485 at D.C. Superior Court at 500 Indiana Avenue, pay their \$45 fee, and apply for a marriage license. You have to wait three full days before receiving the license, and if you want to schedule a civil wedding you must inform the deputy clerk and wait at least ten days. (Sorry, Britney, but D.C. isn't Vegas.)

Although he's failed three times to get a ballot measure past the Board of Elections and Ethics, Jackson won't quit. He wrote on Feb. 8 at TownHall.com, "Despite the [D.C.] council and [D.C. Delegate to Congress] Eleanor Holmes Norton's wheeling and dealing behind the scenes, the cry, 'Let the People Vote!' has reached the ears of many on the Hill."

Reading Jackson, one might think that Ms. Norton and the council members were foreign usurpers rather than well-known local political figures. For example, the two at-large council members up for re-election this year are: (1) the author of the marriage bill, Independent David Catania, a popular reformer who is openly gay; and (2) the committee chair who steered the bill to passage, Democrat Phil Mendelson, who four years ago won every ward of the city. To make things worse for Jackson, Mendelson's leading challenger is the openly gay Clark Ray. I love this town.

Jackson called "The Washington Post" a lefty rag for reporting on a poll it commissioned that shows a majority in the District supports marriage equality. Jackson's group, Stand for Marriage DC, has a poll that shows different results. As it happens, multiple polls confirm the Post's findings. But Jackson can believe his own push polls (as one analysis suggested they are), just as he pretends that the "Amens" from his suburban congregation will affect the vote in D.C.

Jackson praised Sen. Robert Bennett (R-Utah) and Reps. Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) and Jim Jordan (R-Ohio) for introducing a bill to force a ballot measure on the District. This stands about as much chance as a scientist at the Tea Party Convention, but even if it happened, it would be defeated by the liberal-leaning electorate that Jackson denies. Even if a majority, according to the "Post" poll, wants to vote on my rights, which I think is improper, I am glad that in the event a

majority would uphold them.

D.C. voters are not Jackson's true constituents. As my colleague Bob Summersgill reported at www.glaaforum.org on Feb. 2, all of Stand for Marriage DC's reported funding came from groups outside D.C., including Focus on the Family, the National Organization for Marriage, the Family Research Council, and Jackson's High Impact Leadership Coalition. Summersgill also notes that 13 of the scheduled witnesses favoring Jackson's referendum at a Jan. 27 hearing were from Maryland and Virginia.

Jackson helpfully reminds us, "As much as most DC residents want home rule, Congress still has say in the city's affairs until statehood or another governing arrangement is reached." Showing more chutzpah, he follows this with, "Every DC resident should be outraged by the paternalistic attitude of 'The Washington Post.' They act like they know us better than we know ourselves." What does he mean, "we"? And if he knows himself so well, perhaps he can explain his anti-gay fixation.

Jackson said in an interview posted last week on www.washingtonpost.com, "I don't believe the individual rights of gay people are being abridged by my stand on gay marriage." That's literally true, since his stand has little chance of prevailing. But I doubt that's what he meant.

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