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PORTER RESPONDS TO MEDIA ON BUSH MARRIAGE AGENDA

Responding to some media in the 3rd Congressional District of Pennsylvania asking for his comment on the Bush marriage agenda, Dr. Steven Porter, Democratic candidate for Congress, said, "I am a bit disappointed that the request comes for my comments on marriage rather than the issues which most polls show occupy a greater concern with the electorate: the economy, Iraq, health care, etc."

Porter, who is running against six-term conservative Republican incumbent Phil English, continued, "But since I have been asked, I will be happy to respond. First, I believe from a political viewpoint that Bush is raising the topic now for two reasons: to energize the conservative, religious base which may desert the Republicans this fall, and to misdirect the electorate's attention from more fundamental issues on which the Bush administration and Congress have lost the people's support.

"My opinion on the issue of marriage is that it is a personal covenant up to the tenets of the religion or civil jurisdiction involved and constitutionally has no place in the halls of the Federal government. The First Amendment clearly implies a separation between church and state. The Ninth Amendment states: 'The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.' The Tenth Amendment states that those powers not given to the Federal government automatically devolve upon the states or the people. My reading of these amendments is that the Federal government has no right to tell any church or jurisdiction whom to marry or not marry. Additionally, there is nothing in the Constitution which abrogates the civil rights of people on the basis of sexual orientation. I thus interpret that gay people have the same civil rights as heterosexuals whatever name one gives to their living arrangements. To pass a Constitutional amendment to deny those rights on the basis of sexual orientation is quite a dangerous and I believe constitutionally prohibited act. It could lead to discrimination in a host of other circumstances.

"That being said, I plead again with the media to focus on the issues that are of much greater public concern: the economy, Iraq and terrorism, health care, Social Security and pensions, energy costs, the environment, border security and immigration, and the culture of corruption in Washington. My positions on these issues are once again attached to this press release. I hope that the responsible media will disseminate them to the public."