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## Editorial: Strength enough in civil unions

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On Tuesday a Massachusetts Supreme Court ruling opened the door for the state (and maybe eventually the country) to approve same-sex marriages. Was this the opening of Pandora's Box or a long overdue recognition of different lifestyles?

No one would argue that a lifetime companion should be excluded from the hospital room or inheritance of a beloved partner. But when it comes to saying that a same-sex bond should be accorded equal cultural stature with that between man and woman, it is asking for too much.

What is wrong with gay spouses accepting the concept of a civil union? It affords them the legal rights they seek, formalizes their commitment, and reduces the level of opposition. Even many gay-friendly Americans still think the male-female classification of marriage is appropriate and should be left alone.

Despite all the advances in in-vitro fertilization that allow gay couples to be parents, you cannot dismiss the fact that you need a man and a woman (even passively) to create that fertilized egg. From a religious angle, and across many civilizations, that capability for procreation is an important aspect that creates the distinction for a union called a marriage.

Most religions and societies hold fast to the tradition that a man and a woman will marry with the intention of beginning a family. In that context, a child can be raised learning about life through the eyes of both sexes.

A civil union is the appropriate designation and solution for those same-sex partners who want to make a lifetime commitment to each other. It can be marked with the same amount of joy that celebrates a heterosexual marriage.

With gays making up (according to some estimates) less than 10 percent of our population this is not an issue that needs to be pressed. In fact, it could cause more rancor for gays who have been very successful in winning acceptance from the mainstream.

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