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Press Release

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Ken Mehlman, David Kochel, and Iowa Conservatives Speak Out in Support of Marriage Equality

'The freedom to marry is consistent with conservative principles,' say advocates

(Des Moines, IA)—Today, Iowa conservatives joined Ken Mehlman—a New York businessman, former Republican National Committee Chairman, and the architect of President Bush's 2004 successful campaign—for a public event in Des Moines to discuss support for marriage for same-sex couples, and the future of the Republican Party. The public event was held at Davis Brown Law Firm and hosted by Iowa Republicans for Freedom (IRFF), the public education organization making the conservative case for marriage.

"Allowing civil marriage for all Americans promotes freedom, cultivates family values like community stability, fidelity and commitment and follows the Golden Rule," said Mehlman. "Like Dick Cheney, Clint Eastwood, John Bolton and Ted Olson, these Iowa conservatives support civil marriage because of our principles, not in spite of our philosophy."

The event drew more than 30 Iowa conservatives from around the state. Attendees and participants were encouraged to talk to other Iowa conservatives—family, friends and church members—about supporting marriage for same-sex couples.

Mehlman was joined by David Kochel, Mitt Romney's Iowa strategist and founder of Red Wave Communications, who expressed his support for marriage at the event and his desire to see the Iowa Republican Party support civil marriage for same-sex couples.

"Support for the freedom to marry is emerging as a mainstream position in the Republican Party. If we are to be the party of principles and values, isn't our first obligation to the principle of freedom, and the value of individual liberty?" said Kochel. "The Republican Party must think big, be big, welcome new voters, and earn the trust and support of a much broader coalition, or be doomed to shrink into irrelevance."

As the support for the freedom to marry continues to grow, many conservatives are unsure or conflicted about this issue, while others see this as an opportunity for the Republican Party. According to a December 2012 NBC News/ Wall Street Journal national poll, 51 percent of Americans support marriage for same-sex couples versus only 40 percent who oppose legal marriage. Here in Iowa, 49 percent of Iowans support marriage while only 43 percent oppose it.

The event was hosted by Iowa Republicans for Freedom founder and former State Senator Jeff Angelo. In 2004, Angelo co-sponsored the first constitutional ban on marriage for same-sex couples in Iowa. He eventually reversed his position on the issue after talking to his lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) friends, family and constituents. In 2011, he founded Iowa Republicans for Freedom with the goal of increasing support for the freedom to marry among Iowa conservatives.

“As a proud Evangelical Christian and Republican, I believe the freedom to marry is firmly rooted in the values I hold dear—like freedom, individual liberty, and family values,” said Angelo. “By including our gay and lesbian neighbors in civil marriage, we can strengthen Iowa families and continue to build healthy communities for our children. This is why I’m proud to stand with Ken Mehlman and Iowa Republicans to make the conservative case for marriage. It’s the right thing to do.”

Also attending the event was Kathy Potts, Iowa Republicans for Freedom Advisory Board member, and Governor Rick Perry’s Linn County Campaign Chairperson. Potts joined IRFF in 2012 after the Iowa caucuses and has been an avid proponent of increasing Republican support for marriage equality.

“I support marriage for gay and lesbian couples and have been vocal about my support, even when it hasn’t always been the popular thing to do. I am inspired by what Mr. Mehlman has said, and what Jeff Angelo has done here in Iowa. I believe our party is turning a corner and that the future is bright for Republicans. I encourage more Iowa conservatives who believe in limited government and individual liberty to join us in supporting civil marriage for same-sex couples. It’s time.”

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Iowa Republicans for Freedom supports individual liberty for same-sex couples seeking civil marriage recognition from our government. Led by former Iowa Senator Jeff Angelo, Iowa Republicans for Freedom provides a voice to Iowa Republicans who agree that civil marriage is a right that should not be denied to same-sex couples. For more information, please visit www.iowarepublicansforfreedom.org.