

# House Republicans plan to defend DOMA

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WASHINGTON (RNS) House Speaker John Boehner said on Friday (March 4) that he and fellow lawmakers will defend the Defense of Marriage Act after the Obama administration dropped its support for the law last month.

"The constitutionality of this law should be determined by the courts -- not by the president unilaterally -- and this action by the House will ensure the matter is addressed in a manner consistent with our Constitution," said Boehner, R-Ohio.

Attorney General Eric Holder told Boehner last month that President Obama considers the 1996 law that defines marriage as solely between a man and a woman to be unconstitutional.

Boehner said he would convene a bipartisan legal advisory group to defend DOMA. That group, under House rules, is authorized to instruct the office of the House General Counsel to do legal work for the House.

Boehner's decision comes a day after Catholic, Protestant and Sikh leaders pushed Congress to defend DOMA.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Association of Evangelicals and the U.S. branch of the World Sikh Council said in a

joint letter that Obama's decision to stop defending DOMA, as the law is known, "has undermined the rule of law and the separation of powers."

"The American people do not want their wishes being overruled by the judiciary -- or the executive," they wrote.

Signatories to the letter also include executives of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Anglican Church in North America and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel.