

You want equality? Here you go.

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

March 4, 2010

In a recent [post](#),

I highlighted the decision some pro-LGBT pastors have made to get out of the civil marriage business entirely—what they can't do for same-sex couples they won't do for anyone.

It seems the logic works in both directions: you can also *avoid* doing something for same-sex couples by refusing to do it for anyone. The Catholic Archdiocese of Washington has long been in conflict with the District of Columbia over the latter's decision to legalize same-sex marriage, effective yesterday. This week Catholic Charities DC, which provides social services in the district as a city contractor, [announced](#) that it will evade the issue of health insurance for employees' same-sex spouses by declining to offer it to spouses generally.

My first reaction was to marvel that an organization that [promotes health care for all](#) would go out of its way to deny care to its own employees' families. Of course, that's a bit of a rhetorical pivot; obviously they see this as a separate issue from health care. Bryan Cones [highlights](#) a more relevant irony: Catholic Charities DC is defending the abstract "institution of marriage" by making things harder on actual married people.

Cones also points to the more creative and expansive solution pursued by the Archdiocese of San Francisco. I'll add only that this conflict would be largely defused if our culture had a shared understanding that civil marriage rights have [nothing to do with religion](#).