

Email from the office of **Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP**

*21 January 2013*

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter to Nick Clegg sharing your concerns about the Government's proposals to remove the current ban on same-sex couples being able to marry. I am replying on his behalf. We appreciate that the issue of equal marriage may be problematic for those who have strong views on this issue and I would like to take this opportunity to set out Nick and the Liberal Democrats' position on this matter.

There has been much discussion in the press on the issue of equal marriage and I would first like to clarify that the Government will not force any religious organisation to conduct same-sex marriages if they do not wish to do so. It is currently open to any minister or religion to refuse to marry any persons that they choose in a religious service, and that will not change. We remain clear that the beliefs of religious groups on this issue should also be respected.

However, equal marriage is both something that Nick believes in personally and the party believes in collectively. One of the fundamental values for the Liberal Democrats is our firm belief in equality - we have always stood for individual liberty and the right to choose how we lead our lives. As a party, Liberal Democrats support the view that same-sex couples are entitled to equal respect by the state and should have full equality under the law, and believe that the removal of the current ban on same-sex couples being able to marry will help achieve this. Moreover, we believe that two individuals who love each other and want to show a commitment to one another should be able, under law, to get married irrespective of their gender – and that this commitment is something we should celebrate. At our Party Conference in September 2010, our members passed a motion calling for marriage to be opened up to same-sex couples and we are pleased that the Coalition Government is now delivering on this.

Thanks again for sharing your views on this important issue.

Kind regards,

Dorothea Baltruks  
Office of Nick Clegg MP