

**Subj:** New Paltz Again  
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**To the Editor:**

In “Uniforms Mix With Wedding Finery at Same-Sex Nuptials” (Metro, March 14), the latest entrants into the gay marriage melee are Unitarian ministers “solemnizing unlicensed marriages” in open disregard of state law.

This should be viewed not as an act of civil disobedience but as a wake up call that it’s time for the state to get back on its own side of the church/state line.

To those who argue that the traditional form – and sanctity – of marriage must be preserved, I say that such is not the role of government in a free society. The state does indeed have a legitimate interest in marriage, but it is limited to the mandates of governance such as census, property regulation and taxation.

The sacrament of marriage, however, clearly falls within the purview of religion, and religious communities under the first amendment may live their creeds free of governmental interference. Hence, the clergy in New Paltz cannot possibly be guilty of a crime.

Although it flies in the face of 200 years of tradition, states should revoke the entire concept of a “license”, for they do not have legal authority to decide who is entitled to marry, and replace it with a system for the voluntary registration of “domestic unions“. Registrants, regardless of race, religion or sexual orientation, would be recognized as a unit for civil purposes and be bound to all pertinent laws. Equally important, this approach would get the state out of the marriage business without jeopardizing the running of government.

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