FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASA Amicus Brief Supports Lawsuits to Overturn Nevada, Hawaii Gay Marriage Bans
Association Says Same-Sex Marriage Opponents Often Misportray Social Science Research

WASHINGTON, DC, October 24, 2013 — The American Sociological Association (ASA) filed an amicus brief with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit today supporting efforts to overturn gay marriage bans in Nevada and Hawaii and highlighting the overwhelming body of social science research that confirms “children fare just as well” when same-sex or heterosexual parents raise them. The Ninth Circuit is scheduled to hear lawsuits challenging the bans in the coming months.

“The supporters of gay marriage bans in these cases offer no facts to support the contention that Nevada and Hawaii possess an important or rational basis for their respective state laws against marriage for same-sex couples,” said ASA Executive Officer Sally T. Hillsman.

The amicus brief is part of the ASA’s ongoing effort to ensure that U.S. courts considering lawsuits to legalize gay marriage understand that social science research shows parents’ sexual orientation has no bearing on their children’s well-being.

“When the social science evidence is exhaustively examined—which the ASA has done—the facts demonstrate that children fare just as well when raised by same-sex parents,” states the ASA amicus brief. “Unsubstantiated fears regarding same-sex parents do not overcome these facts and do not justify upholding the Nevada and Hawaii marriage bans.”

Gay marriage opponents, including those defending the same-sex marriage bans in Nevada and Hawaii, often misinterpret or misrepresent social science research, claiming it indicates children with gay parents have worse outcomes than those with heterosexual parents. In particular, same-sex marriage opponents frequently misportray research by Mark Regnerus, a sociologist at the University of Texas at Austin.

“The Regnerus papers and other sources gay marriage opponents often rely on provide no basis for their arguments because this research does not directly examine the well-being of children raised by same-sex parents,” Hillsman said. “These analyses therefore do not undermine the consensus from the social science research and do not establish a legitimate basis for gay marriage bans in Nevada, Hawaii, or anywhere else.”

Rather than proving same-sex marriage is a bad thing for children, social science research actually suggests the opposite. “The research supports the conclusion that the extension of marriage rights to same-sex couples has the potential to improve child well-being insofar as the institution of marriage may provide social and legal support to families and enhance family stability—all of which are key drivers of positive child outcomes,” Hillsman said.

Founded in 1905, the ASA has more than 13,000 members and a long history of presenting the consensus research findings of sociologists to American courts for their use in evaluating evidence and legal issues. Earlier this year, the ASA weighed in on the gay marriage cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, filing an amicus brief similar to the one submitted today.

In its June decision, the Supreme Court overturned the Defense of Marriage Act, requiring the federal government to recognize same-sex marriages already legalized under the law of several states, and abolished Proposition 8, paving the way for gay couples to once again marry in California.

- more -
Wendy Diane Manning, Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Family & Demographic Research, and Co-Director of the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University, led ASA’s examination of the social science research. Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP of New York City served as counsel to the ASA on its briefs for the Ninth Circuit and the Supreme Court.

###

**About the American Sociological Association**

The American Sociological Association ([www.asanet.org](http://www.asanet.org)), founded in 1905, is a non-profit membership association dedicated to serving sociologists in their work, advancing sociology as a science and profession, and promoting the contributions to and use of sociology by society.