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WASHINGTON (ABP)—Despite clarifications from the White House, some socially conservative groups are criticizing President Bush for comments suggesting he will not pressure senators to pass a constitutional amendment outlawing same-sex marriage.

The comments, first published in a Jan. 16 Washington Post story based on an interview with Bush, suggested that he would not expend significant political capital in an attempt to pass the amendment.

According to the Post, Bush said it is not necessary to press for the amendment because so many senators have said a federal law known as the Defense of Marriage Act is sufficient to prevent the spread of gay marriage across the country. Massachusetts is currently the only jurisdiction in the country where same-sex marriage is legal.

“Senators have made it clear that so long as (the Defense of Marriage Act)

is deemed constitutional, nothing will happen,” Bush told the Post. “I’d take their admonition seriously. ... Until that changes, nothing will happen in the Senate.”

The proposal, also known as the Federal Marriage Amendment or Marriage Protection Amendment, died in Congress last year, after it failed on a procedural vote in the Senate. Several Republicans joined most Democrats in opposing it.

Dan Bartlett, the White House’s communications director, sought to clarify Bush’s statements on Sunday television news shows Jan. 16, saying the statement simply reflects Bush’s perspective on the legislative reality and “does not change President Bush’s view” on the amendment or his support for it.

But conservative Christians—whose high turnout rates on election day was credited by many pundits for Bush’s re-election—have campaigned heavily for the proposal. Family Research Council President Tony Perkins, in a press release responding to Bush’s comments, said the voters who elected him to office expect him to push hard for the amendment.

“Let’s be clear. Both here and abroad, the judicial assault on man-woman marriage is well underway,” Perkins said. “For our nation’s leaders to be advocating that we wait for the Defense of Marriage Act to be struck down by the courts before they act to protect marriage is like a fire chief telling a local hotel to wait until there is a fire to install a sprinkler system.”

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