

Catherine Cojocar: Pursuit of life, liberty still worth fighting for

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The Fourth of July is a time to honor, celebrate and reflect upon the things that make the United States of America great.

We have come a long way in our 236 years of nationhood, enduring multiple costly wars, adapting to rapidly changing social norms, and learning how to acclimate to a volatile economy. We certainly have a lot to celebrate. But in addition to being a time to focus on our successes, Independence Day can also serve as a reminder that our nation still has more to accomplish before "liberty and justice for all" is truly established — and still has the fighting spirit to see these things into fruition.

In November, Minnesotans will vote on Senate Bill 1308, more commonly known as the marriage amendment.

According to the Legislature's website, the bill aims to create a "Constitutional amendment to recognize marriage solely between one man and one woman." Same-sex marriage in Minnesota is already prohibited, but adding an amendment to Minnesota's Constitution barring it would make the repeal of such an amendment virtually impossible, almost certainly never allowing same-sex couples to be legally married.

Sure, positive legislation on civil unions may still be presented, but it has become painfully apparent that the rights granted to couples under civil unions pale

greatly in comparison to couples that have the right to marry. In the realms of taxes, health care and Social Security benefits, it is obvious that same-sex couples are still being treated as second-class citizens.

So, Minnesota, these few months between now and Nov. 6 will serve as a time to think. Does another person's happiness truly infringe on yours? Will the granting of another person's rights remove your rights in some way? Do two chapters of Old Testament law negate entire Gospels based on "love thy neighbor?" Would you want your children and grandchildren to look back upon this election with pride in their country or filled with embarrassment by their ancestor's choices?

This bill is a chance for Minnesotans to declare that, no, we will not write hatred and discrimination into our very Constitution — that we as Americans are still as brave as we were in 1776, to continue to fight for the rights of all our citizens. Remember what we as a nation stand for — life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

And as Hillary Clinton urged the United Nations in her December 2011 remarks recognizing International Human Rights Day, I urge you, Minnesota — this November, "be on the right side of history."

Catherine Cojocar graduated from Lourdes High School last month. To respond to an opinion column, send an email to life@postbulletin.com.