

Case Study: Nuptials

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BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana's Legislature on Monday became the first in the nation to approve a law to allow a new and more binding form of marriage contract, one that would allow divorce only in narrow circumstances such as adultery, abuse, abandonment, a lengthy marital separation or the felony conviction of one spouse.

The bill passed both houses by overwhelming margins Monday and Governor Mike Foster is expected to sign it, said Marsanne Golsby, the Governor's press secretary.

Known as covenant marriage, the new contract would be entered voluntarily, and the law would not preclude couples from entering a marriage that allows a standard no-fault divorce.

But it would require betrothed couples to choose the form of their marriage contract before they declared their vows, a choice that would almost certainly make for some awkward premarital conversations.

That is part of the point, according to the bill's sponsors. By requiring couples to choose between a no-fault marriage and a covenant marriage, the new legislation would force them to more seriously consider their compatibility before getting married and starting families, said State Representative Tony Perkins, who sponsored the bill.

Kevin Sack