



The issue:

# MARRIAGE

**More than 8 million** Americans are denied the freedom to marry.



## damn facts

At the federal level, straight married couples receive more than 1,000 benefits and protections.<sup>18</sup>

Approximately 3 million gay and lesbian adults live together in committed relationships.<sup>19</sup>

More than 1 in 3 gay and lesbian couples aged 22 to 55 are raising children.<sup>20</sup>

Only 5 states and the District of Columbia allow gay couples to wed.<sup>21</sup>

The 1996 Defense of Marriage Acts allows any state to refuse to recognize a legal marriage between two gay people.<sup>22</sup>

## a project of



## We All Deserve to Marry: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MARRIAGE!

Many gay and lesbian Americans have been in committed, stable relationships with the same person for 10, 20, even 50 years.<sup>1</sup> About 3 million are actually living together.<sup>2</sup> And more than 1 in 3 gay couples aged 22 to 55 are raising children together.<sup>3</sup>

Same-sex couples can marry in 12 countries, across 4 continents. But in the U.S., millions of gay people are denied the freedom to marry.

### WHY MARRIAGE IS IMPORTANT!

Being able to marry is important for a couple of reasons.

**Symbol of love and commitment.** In our society, marriage is *the* symbol of a person's love for another person. Being able to make the ultimate, public commitment to the person you love most in the world is a meaningful experience for many of us—and, nothing says "We are family" the way that marriage does.

**Protection for family.** In the U.S., no legal status or arrangement offers the protections that marriage provides. Marriage grants thousands of federal and state protections that Americans regularly count on to care for their families. With marriage, you can:

- Take leave from work to care for a loved one who's sick and not have to worry about losing your job<sup>4</sup>
- Visit your spouse in the hospital and make decisions regarding their care<sup>5</sup>
- Pass on your Social Security benefits/pension to your loved ones if you pass away<sup>6</sup>
- Cover your spouse on your health insurance—and without being taxed for it<sup>7</sup>
- Live together with your husband or wife in a nursing home in older age.<sup>8</sup>

### WHERE MARRIAGE IS AT RIGHT NOW!

Currently, 5 states—Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont—and the District of Columbia legally allow gay couples to wed.<sup>9</sup> New York, Rhode Island and Maryland recognize marriages by gay couples legally wed in another state.<sup>10</sup>

But under the 1996 so-called Defense of Marriage Act, individual states have the "right" to refuse to recognize marriages of gay couples performed in other states—even though states traditionally have recognized one another's marriages.<sup>11</sup> Further, 40 states explicitly define marriage as being between one man and one woman.<sup>12</sup>

Five states—California, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon and Washington—provide state-level domestic partnerships or civil unions to gay couples.<sup>13</sup> Four states—Colorado, Hawaii, Maine and Wisconsin—provide some statewide benefits related to domestic partnerships to gay couples in that state.<sup>14</sup> Maryland and Rhode Island also provide certain limited benefits to domestic partners.<sup>15</sup>



www.hrc.org

The Human Rights Campaign is the nation's largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organization.



www.freedomtomarry.org

Freedom to Marry is the leading campaign working to win marriage nationwide.

## HOW MARRIAGE COMPARES TO CIVIL UNIONS/DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS!

Actually, there is no comparison. Civil unions and domestic partnerships are lesser versions of marriage that treat gay Americans like second-class citizens.<sup>16</sup> Here are just 2 reasons why:

**No portability.** Civil unions and domestic partnerships are only recognized in a handful of states to begin with. The protections offered in one state may differ—or not exist at all—if a couple travels or moves out of state.

**No federal protections.** Civil unions and domestic partnerships don't provide any of the more than 1,000-plus federal protections given to married Americans, such as having the option of filing joint tax returns.

## WHAT LEGISLATION SUPPORTS MARRIAGE!

Barring a federal law that would allow any gay American to marry, the Respect for Marriage Act (RMA) would at least level the playing field for those gay cou-

ples that have already legally wed. RMA would repeal the Defense of Marriage Act and allow *all* legally married couples to receive federal marriage protections and benefits—whether they travel or move out of state. It would not require any person, state, locality or religious organization to license a marriage between two gay adults.<sup>17</sup>

## DEFEND MARRIAGE FOR REAL!

Because ultimately, all citizens should be treated equally, and be given the same level of protections from the federal and state governments, regardless of who they are.

We need to defend marriage for real, and extend the right to marry to all who will honor the institution with the gravity and reverence it deserves.

It's time for things to change.

We all have to get involved. We all have to give a damn.

**WE GIVE A DAMN. DO YOU?**

## I GIVE A DAMN ABOUT MARRIAGE! Now What?

- **JOIN THE GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN:** The Give A Damn Campaign is for everybody who cares about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality, especially all you straight people out there!
  - Register now at [www.wegiveadamn.org](http://www.wegiveadamn.org)
- **GET INFORMED:** Learn more about the issues.
  - Watch a Damn Video or read people's Personal Stories
  - Check out our Damn Blog, which is updated daily
- **GET INVOLVED:** Spread the word about equality to family and friends!
  - Share a Damn Video or tell us your Personal Story
  - Forward this PDF
- **VISIT OUR NON-PROFIT PARTNERS' WEBSITES**
  - Freedom to Marry: [www.freedomtomarry.org](http://www.freedomtomarry.org)
  - Human Rights Campaign: [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

[www.wegiveadamn.org](http://www.wegiveadamn.org)

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 3 Sears, R. Bradley, et al. "Same-Sex Couples and Same-Sex Couples Raising Children in the United States, Data From Census 2000," The Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy, UCLA School of Law,  
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 12 Human Rights Campaign. "Statewide Marriage Prohibitions," June 4, 2009. www.hrc.org  
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 16 Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD). "Civil Marriage v. Civil Unions: What's the Difference?" August 2009.  
 17 Human Rights Campaign. "Respect for Marriage Act," January 7, 2010. www.hrc.org  
 18 Freedom to Marry. www.freedomtomarry.org Human Rights Campaign. www.hrc.org

19-20 See 1-2.  
 21 See 9-10.  
 22 See 17.