



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 18, 2011

Delaware Legalizes Homosexual Unions

Delaware will become the eighth state to legalize civil unions for homosexual partners when Governor Jack Markell signs the bill approved on April 14 by the state's House of Representatives, following passage in the Senate earlier in the week. The Governor said he looked forward to affixing his signature to the law. "I think it's time for this bill to be passed, and it's going to be good for so many Delawareans for years to come," he told the Associated Press. "I'm really pleased with it."



With implementation of the law on January 1 of next year, homosexual partners in the state will have the same rights as married couples — while the bill makes it clear that, for the time being at least, real marriage in Delaware is defined as only between a man and a woman.

Democratic State Representative Melanie George explained that she sponsored the bill because "we were all created with special, unique, beautiful differences. Our government respects those differences."

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Lisa Goodman, president of Equality Delaware, said that she and fellow homosexual rights activists were "tremendously proud" of the Delaware House for completing the deal that gives same-sex partners many of the same rights as married couples. "The fact that the Delaware General Assembly passed civil union legislation on the first attempt is a great testament to how far public opinion has come on equality issues. This is a great day for equality in Delaware."

But attorney Mark Napier of the [Alliance Defense Fund](#), a conservative legal advocacy group that has defended traditional marriage in several states, warned that the law will inevitably prompt lawsuits. "Mark my words, there will be litigation over this," said Napier, adding that the legislation "is a precursor to same-sex marriage."

During consideration of the bill, the House rejected nine amendments to the measure, including one specifying that unmarried heterosexuals could also apply for civil union status, another stressing that the bill was not intended to make civil unions the legal equivalent of marriage, and a third that would have sent the bill to the citizens of Delaware for approval in a statewide referendum.

The House also rejected an amendment from conservative Democratic Representative William Carson stipulating that no one could be sued for refusing, because of religious convictions, to participate or assist in any event related to a marriage or civil union. In arguing against the amendment, Rep. George insisted that, in addition to allowing business owners an out on serving homosexual couples, it could



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also be used by those who did not want to serve interracial couples, warning that the combined discrimination would take the state back “to a dark place in our country’s history that we fought to get rid of.... That is not what Delawareans want.”

After the House vote, the ADF’s Mark Napier scolded the lawmakers, telling them that they had “created a new civil right, but you’ve done it at the expense of the institution of marriage, at the expense of children, and at the expense of taxpayers who have no clue what they’re buying. A vote for civil unions is a vote against marriage in Delaware. And that will be your voting record.”

Photo: The Delaware General Assembly meets in the Legislative Hall in Dover.



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