



Andrew M. Cuomo - Governor

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Governor Cuomo Announces Passage of Marriage Equality Act

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Albany, NY (June 24, 2011)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced passage of the Marriage Equality Act, granting same-sex couples the freedom to marry under the law, as well as hundreds of rights, benefits, and protections that have been limited to married couples of the opposite sex.

"New York has finally torn down the barrier that has prevented same-sex couples from exercising the freedom to marry and from receiving the fundamental protections that so many couples and families take for granted," Governor Cuomo said. "With the world watching, the Legislature, by a bipartisan vote, has said that all New Yorkers are equal under the law. With this vote, marriage equality will become a reality in our state, delivering long overdue fairness and legal security to thousands of New Yorkers."

"I commend Majority Leader Dean Skelos and Minority Leader John Sampson for their leadership and Senator Tom Duane for his lifetime commitment to fighting for equality for all New Yorkers," Governor Cuomo continued. "I also thank Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell for ushering this measure through their chamber."

The Marriage Equality Act amends New York's Domestic Relations Law to state:

- ~ A marriage that is otherwise valid shall be valid regardless of whether the parties to the marriage are of the same or different sex
- ~ No government treatment or legal status, effect, right, benefit, privilege, protection or responsibility relating to marriage shall differ based on the parties to the marriage being the same sex or a different sex
- ~ No application for a marriage license shall be denied on the ground that the parties are of the same or a different sex

The Marriage Equality Act was amended to include protections for religious organizations. The Act states that no religious entity, benevolent organization or not-for-profit corporation that is operated, supervised or controlled by a religious entity, or their employees can be required to perform marriage ceremonies or provide their facilities for marriage ceremonies, consistent with their religious principles. In addition, religious entities will not be subject to any legal action for refusing marriage ceremonies. The Act will grant equal access to the government-created legal institution of civil marriage while leaving the religious institution of marriage to its own separate and fully autonomous sphere. Additionally, the Act was amended to include a clause that states that if any part is deemed invalid through the judicial process and after all appeals in the courts, the entire Act would be considered invalid.

The Act was made a reality thanks largely to New Yorkers United for Marriage, a coalition of leading New York LGBT rights organizations who have fought so that all couples in New York have the freedom to marry. The partners include Empire State Pride Agenda, Freedom to Marry, Human Rights Campaign, Marriage Equality New York, and Log Cabin Republicans.

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