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A look at the couples challenging Connecticut's marriage laws

AP Associated Press

By The Associated Press | May 14, 2007

Eight gay couples are challenging the state law that prohibits them from marrying. From the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders Web site, here is a look at the couples:

 Elizabeth Kerrigan, 52, and Joanne Mock, 53, of West Hartford, have been together for 13 years and are parents of 5-year-old twin boys, Carlos and Fernando.

They adopted the boys from Guatemala and have protected their family through second parent adoption, but say they want to offer more security to their children. They have chosen not to have a civil union and are waiting for marriage.

 Damaris Navarro, 47, and Gloria Searson, 48, of West Haven, have

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been together for 13 years. They are raising four children, 22-year-old Kwame, 18-year-old Touri, 19-year-old Nathaniel and 8-year-old Starneisha. They had a civil union in Vermont in 2001 but say not being able to marry has presented a variety of problems and makes them feel like outsiders and substandard citizens.

Carol Conklin, 54, and Janet Peck, 56, of Colchester have been together for 31 years. They knew each other in high school together and reconnected after college. Both women were born and raised in Connecticut and now own local businesses. Peck has a mental health counseling practice and Conklin is an electrician and home contractor. The women say they realized firsthand how important a marriage license is when Conklin was denied access to visit Peck in intensive care after she was recovering from surgery to remove tumors from her liver.

Geraldine and Suzanne Artis of Clinton have been together for 13 years and have three children, a 9-year-old and 7-year-old twins. Geraldine, 37, works as a recreation therapist and Suzanne, 36, teaches in a public school. They say they want to marry so they can receive all the benefits that come with a marriage license, including health and emergency care.

Stephen Davis, 55, and Jeffrey Busch, 44, moved to Busch's hometown of Wilton in 1997. There, they have built a family with the addition of their son Elijah in 2002. Davis runs the digital library program at Columbia University, where he has worked since 1988, and Busch is an administrative judge and part-time legal services lawyer in New York City. They have been together since 1989. They have a civil union, but Busch, who now only works part time, cannot share in Davis' Social Security without a marriage license.

J.E. Martin, 45, and Denise Howard, 50, of Stratford, have been a couple for 17 years and are parents of 10-year-old Rachel and 7-year-old Ross. The women say they have felt the harsh consequences of not having a marriage license. When Howard was laid off from work, she was forced to buy health benefits, and Martin is concerned about whether her company pension will be available to support Howard after her death. Martin works General Electric for 20

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years, and Howard is an account representative for HealthNet.

John Anderson, 64, and Garrett Stack, 60, of Woodbridge, have been together for nearly 27 years. Both men have spent their careers in education. Stack retired as the principal of Franklin Elementary School and Anderson is retired from teaching Latin at Stratford's Bunnell High School. They have a civil union but say that does not allow them to share their retirement money as any other married couple would.

Barbara and Robin Levine-Ritterman of New Haven, have been together since 1989 and are the parents of 11-year-old Maya and 9-year-old Joshua. Barbara, 48, was diagnosed with breast cancer in June 2004 and has gone through surgery and chemotherapy. Robin, 54, says she now realizes how vulnerable her family is without the legal protections of marriage. They are joined in a civil union but say it does not provide the same protections as marriage. Robin is a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist and Barbara owns a computer business. ■

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