



Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders

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GLAD Files Suit to End Connecticut's Exclusion of Lesbian and Gay Couples from Marriage Rights

(Hartford, CT) Seven gay and lesbian couples from across Connecticut who were recently denied marriage licenses in Madison filed suit today in New Haven Superior Court challenging the State's discriminatory denial of marriage rights to same-sex couples. The plaintiff couples, who have been in committed relationships for between 10 and 28 years, many of them raising children, contend that only marriage will provide them with the protections and benefits they need to live securely as a family.

The plaintiffs are represented by New England's Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) in cooperation with Maureen Murphy of Murphy, Murphy, Nugent in New Haven, Kenneth J. Bartschi of Horton, Shields & Knox in Hartford, and the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union. The defendants are the Department of Public Health (DPH), which supervises the registration of all marriages, and Dorothy C. Bean, the town registrar of vital statistics in Madison, who denied plaintiffs marriage licenses.

"This case presents a historic opportunity for Connecticut," said Mary Bonauto, GLAD's Civil Rights Director. "Marriage is both a profound personal commitment and unique legal relationship that provides enormous protections to families. As a simple matter of equality, it is time for Connecticut to end this discrimination against same-sex couples and their families."

GLAD represented plaintiff couples in the Massachusetts Goodridge case, which led to the first-in-the-nation ruling in 2003 ordering the state to issue marriage licenses to same-sex residents beginning May 17, 2004. In addition, GLAD was counsel in the Vermont case in 1999, which resulted in the Legislature granting civil unions to gay and lesbian couples, another historic outcome.

In the current case, five of the seven couples have young children; some have faced health issues and worry about being denied access to one other in times of crisis. While all the couples are concerned about receiving the full range of protections that only flow through marriage, many also believe that only marriage will convey the depth and commitment of their relationships to their families and the world at large.

"This case is about American citizens who pay taxes, vote, walk their dogs, wash their cars, own homes, and raise children," said Teresa C. Younger, Executive Director of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union. "Our plaintiffs, American gay men and lesbians, are entitled to the same protections and rights as other Americans. The American dream is embedded in equality and fairness, and marrying the one you love is part of the American dream. No one should be denied that right."

"Each of the couples in this case is responsible to each other, their children and the larger community," said Bonauto. "They share a great deal in common with other families in Connecticut. They are schoolteachers and parents and therapists. One mother coaches soccer. Others volunteer in their communities or children's schools. Like all married couples, they have made a commitment to each other for life. Yet, because they are denied marriage rights, none of them can fully protect themselves, their relationship, or their children."

The plaintiff couples are:

- **Beth Kerrigan and Jody Mock** of West Hartford, parents of two-year-old twin boys;
- **Janet Peck and Carol Conklin** of Colchester, life-long Connecticut residents who share a relationship of 28 years;
- **Jeffrey Busch and Stephen Davis** of Wilton, who work in New York City and are raising their two-year-old son, Elijah;
- **J.E. Martin and Denise Howard** of Stratford, parents of seven-year-old Rachel and four-year-old Ross;
- **Barbara and Robin Levine-Ritterman** of New Haven, who along with their nine-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son are facing the challenge of Barb's breast cancer;
- **John Anderson and Garrett Stack** of Woodbridge, who have a combined 55 years of service to the Stratford public school system;
- **Geraldine and Suzanne Artis** of Middletown, parents of a six-year-old and four-year-old twins.

GLAD has a proud history of working on legal issues in Connecticut. Its cases include *Boy Scouts of America v. Wyman*, in which GLAD helped secure an appellate court ruling supporting the state comptroller's decision to exclude the Boy Scouts in the state charitable campaign because of their anti-gay policy; *Brett et al. v. Town of West Hartford*, in which GLAD successfully challenged a town pool's membership policy that discriminated against families formed by gay and lesbian couples, and *In Re John/Jane Doe*, in which GLAD helped secure an administrative ruling clarifying that transgender people are covered by the state non-discrimination law.

The Connecticut Civil Liberties Union is the civil liberties organization in Connecticut and has been protecting and defending the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and individual rights of our citizens for 55 years.

For more information on the case and for profiles of the plaintiff couples, go to www.glad.org/marriage.

Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) is New England's leading legal rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity and expression.

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