



Gay couples appear in court to challenge state's marriage laws

NEW HAVEN, Conn. -- Eight gay couples gathered Tuesday in New Haven Superior Court as a Superior Court judge began hearing their challenge to Connecticut's ban on gay marriage.

The couples claim in a lawsuit that the state's marriage laws are unconstitutional because they treat gay and heterosexual couples differently.

The Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, a group involved in the case, used a similar argument to win gay marriage in Massachusetts.

After they were denied marriage licenses in August 2004, the couples filed suit against the state Department of Public Health, which is being defended by Attorney General Richard Blumenthal's office.

Last year, Connecticut approved civil unions for gay couples, which give them the same legal rights as heterosexual married couples. But the law also defined marriage as existing only between a man and a woman.

Jeffrey Busch of Wilton attended Tuesday's court hearing with his partner, Stephen Davis, and son, Elijah.

"I'm pretty hopeful and optimistic," he said. "Connecticut has done so much to allow us to be a family. I believe the courts will correct this injustice of not allowing us to marry."

The Family Institute of Connecticut, a group that opposes gay marriage, has asked to intervene in the case, claiming Blumenthal's office is not vigorously defending Connecticut's marriage laws. The state Supreme Court has not yet ruled on whether the group can become part of the case.

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