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## national news

### Rights linked to marriage? Let me count the ways...

A new congressional report—quietly released six months after the Defense of Marriage Act was passed in Congress—identifies 1,049 federal laws in which, according to the General Accounting Office, "marital status is a factor, even though some of these laws may not directly create benefits, rights or privileges." The study, which the GAO concedes did not and could not examine every law in the U.S. Code, was ordered last September by House Judiciary Chairman Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-Ill.) at the behest of Steve Gunderson, former Republican congressman for Wisconsin.

Evan Wolfson, Marriage Project director for Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and co-counsel in the Hawaii marriage trial, expressed outrage that Congress approved DOMA before obtaining this information: "The GAO report further proves our case for ending marriage discrimination. With so many legal protections and responsibilities linked only through civil marriage, it is not possible to devise individual contracts or domestic partner programs that could anticipate all these needs or replace this institution."

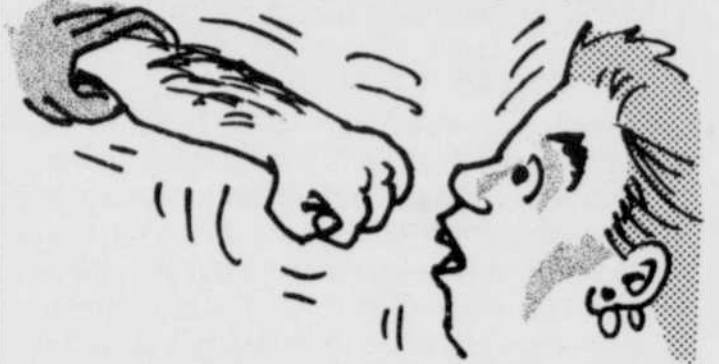
The 102-page report was finalized Feb. 7. Some of the categories of federal law that refer to marital status are: Social Security and related programs, housing and food stamps; veterans' benefits; taxation; employment benefits; immigration; and trade and commerce. Copies of the GAO report are available on the Internet at <http://www.gao.gov/> or from the Office of General Counsel, U.S. General Accounting Office, Washington, DC 20548.

since the bone density measurements considered in the study are result of the women's estrogen levels during their reproductive years.

Dr. Elizabeth Barrett-Connor of the University of California at San Diego, however, said the study at least raises fresh doubts about this treatment. She suggested that physicians should at least consider this new evidence when deciding to prescribe estrogen supplements.

### Same-sex domestic violence recognized as criminal

A state appeals court in Cincinnati, Ohio, has ruled unanimously that a homosexual can be considered a domestic violence victim, reports United Press International. After Ronnie Yaden, 32, was convicted last year of hitting his partner,

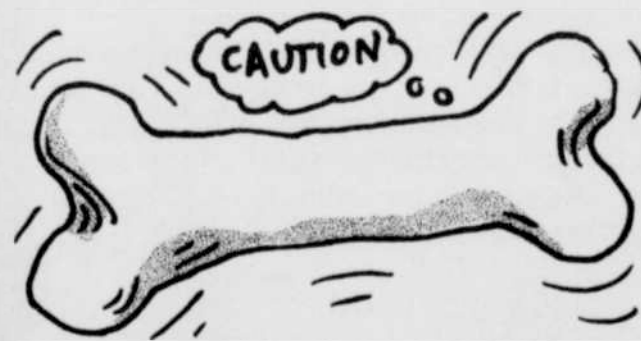


Joe Fields, and was sentenced to 180 days in jail, he attempted to reverse the decision by arguing that the state's domestic violence law was not intended to include homosexual relationships. The appellate ruling upholding Yaden's conviction is based on the fact that he and Fields were living together, presenting themselves as a couple and providing emotional support to one another.

Yaden's attorney, William Gallagher, expressed concern about the ruling, saying the ramifications of the decision could extend to roommates and not just same-sex couples. Yaden, who had been released on appellate bond during the case, will be required to serve the remainder of his sentence unless he makes an appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court.

### Strong bones may forecast breast cancer risk

A Boston study of postmenopausal women indicates a link between bone density and breast cancer risk, corroborating a similar study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* last November, reports The Associated Press. The current study found that older women with strong, healthy bones—believed to be the result of high lifetime exposure to the female sex hormone estrogen—have nearly four times the breast cancer risk of women with weak bones. This could make bone strength the most conclusive predictor of breast cancer risk over family history of the disease, which increases risk two to three times.



Estrogen long has been suspected as a factor in the development of breast cancer: Going through puberty at an early age, having few or no children and having menopause late, which all increase a woman's lifetime exposure to estrogen, have for years been known risk factors. Receiving the hormone in birth control pills does not appear to affect the risk level, but not all experts are in agreement about the effects of estrogen replacement therapy for postmenopausal women.

Douglas Kiel, geriatrics specialist at Hebrew Rehabilitation Center for the Aged in Boston and co-author of the study, cautioned that the findings should not dissuade women from trying to keep their bones healthy. While estrogen production has a potent influence on bone strength, exercise and dietary calcium also keep bones strong and healthy without increasing cancer risk. Kiel also said the studies do not constitute sufficient evidence for or against hormone replacement therapy

### STD-prevention programs work, need to be expanded

Research published Feb. 28 by the Centers for Disease Control says two sexually transmitted disease prevention programs, one covering six mountain region states and another covering six mid-Atlantic states, resulted in chlamydia infection reductions of 16 percent and 31 percent among women younger than 20, echoing the results of an earlier Pacific Northwest program that has reduced infections by two thirds since 1988. In 1995 nearly 500,000 cases of chlamydia were reported to the CDC, according to United Press International, making it the most commonly reported infectious disease in the United States.

Although accurate tests exist to identify chlamydia in both men and women and effective antibiotic treatments are available, federal health officials say there are nevertheless about 3.5 million undiagnosed cases of the disease.

The estimated cost of caring for complications of untreated chlamydia reached \$2 billion nationwide in 1994, whereas a comprehensive prevention program would cost about \$175 million, according to Judith Wasserheit of the CDC's STD division. She added that programs should be aimed at poor men and women and that chlamydia screening should be standard for sexually active adolescents and young adults because the disease most often hits young people.

### San Diego AIDS agency closes its doors

Already nearly \$1 million in debt and facing the loss of \$1.5 million in federal contracts, the San Diego AIDS Foundation, the city's oldest

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