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Worried About Your Rights?

You Should Be,

Gay and Lesbian couples need to take extra precautions when creating an estate plan. Why? Because the government doesn't provide equal rights to same sex couples, and it's essential that you're prepared for the legal battle that may ensue when you or your partner die.

Rely on Someone Who Know Your Rights

Richard Schneider, a local attorney with 20 years of experience, is an excellent resource. He's well versed in the legal dilemmas that the GLBT community faces and can help you arm yourself against intervention by the courts. He'll be happy to provide you with a free one-hour consultation, advising you and our partner of your rights and show you the best way to protect them.

Prepare for Tomorrow by Planning Today

Call us today for a **FREE** report entitled "Gay and Lesbian Couples Face Special Challenges in Estate Planning."

LAW OFFICES OF RICHARD B. SCHNEIDER, LLC
 2455 NW Marshall Street, Suite 11
 Portland, Oregon 97210

For a **FREE** Consultation Call Richard Schneider at **(503) 241-1215** Today!
 Visit our website at www.rbsllc.com

NATIONAL news



Sandra Heath and Alicia Toby demand the right to marry June 26 in Jersey City, N.J.

NEW JERSEY

In a historic case aiming to legalize marriage for same-sex couples—and therefore advance the rights of these couples beyond domestic partnership benefits or Vermont's civil union law—seven lesbian and gay couples filed a suit June 26 against the state of New Jersey in Hudson County Superior Court in Jersey City.

The plaintiffs, declaring they are tired of paying first-class taxes while being treated like second-class citizens, demanded they be allowed to marry just like their heterosexual friends, family and neighbors. Because the lawsuit is based solely on the state constitution, the New Jersey Supreme Court will have the last word in the case.

"Civil marriage is the legal safety net that our society provides to support committed couples, and same-sex partners need the rights and responsibilities that come with it just as much as heterosexual couples," said David Buckel, Lambda Legal senior staff attorney. "This case provides New Jersey with the opportunity to do what's fair by providing legal equality to loving and committed same-sex couples across the state."

The plaintiffs have been together between 10 and 30 years. Five of the seven couples have children.

"We want to say 'we're married' and have our community instantly understand the kind of loving relationship that we have—that we're in it for the long haul, through thick and thin," Sandra Heath said. Her partner of 13 years, Alicia Toby, added, "We shouldn't have to jump through a million hoops to prove who we are to each other, and even then not be treated as equal to other couples."

On the heels of passage June 20 by the state Assembly, the state Senate voted 38-0 for a bill requiring all New Jersey school districts to adopt harassment and bullying prevention policies. The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network applauded the Legislature for taking steps to bolster protections for queer students and called on Gov. James E. McGreevey to sign the measure before the end of this year's session.

"We are heartened that New Jersey's lawmakers have taken this important step on behalf of the safety and well-being of the state's 1.3 million students," executive director Kevin Jennings said. "This bill provides a clear directive to school districts that all of their students...must be protected against bullying and harassment."

The bill builds upon New Jersey's Law Against



James E. McGreevey

Discrimination, which prohibits bias in public institutions on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation. This new measure strengthens the existing legal obligations by including specific requirements for schools to adopt, implement and publicize policies and procedures for addressing instances of bullying and harassment.

New Jersey is one of eight states that protect students from discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation. In addition, passage would make the state the third to include specific protections for trans students.

MINNESOTA

A federal appeals court June 20 said a Minneapolis public school met its legal obligation by giving alternate restroom options to an instructor who did not want to use the same facilities as a male-to-female trans library employee in what the American Civil Liberties Union called a "watershed victory."

Southwest High teacher Carla Cruzan complained that allowing Debra Davis to use the women's bathroom violated her religious freedom and created a hostile workplace based on sex. As a result, the school provided her with ready access to several other bathrooms, including single-person facilities and other women's restrooms.

Unsatisfied with Southwest's accommodation for her, Cruzan asked a federal court to block Davis from using the women's restrooms. She lost and appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit in St. Louis.

"This case had two common threads that we see all across the country: Someone didn't want a transgendered person to have basic access to restrooms and then used religion as a smoke screen for blatant discrimination," attorney Tamara Lange said. "Carla Cruzan was the person who thought there was a problem here, so the school was right to find some other alternative for her—not for the transgendered employee."

NATIONAL

Servicemembers Legal Defense Network called on Air Forces Reserve officials June 24 to cease using an enlistment application that illegally asks recruits about their sexual orientation.

The document, which appears to be used throughout the Air Force Reserve, also is posted on the Air Force Reserve Command Publication and Forms Web page. Last updated in 1987, six years before implementation of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, it includes two questions regarding an applicant's sexual orientation:

- Are you a homosexual or bisexual? ("Homosexual" is defined as: sexual desire or behavior directed at a person(s) of one's own sex. "Bisexual" is defined as: a person sexually responsive to both sexes.)
- Do you intend to engage in homosexual acts (sexual relations with another person of the same sex)?

PHOTO BY BOB PILEGGI