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## Decisions, Decisions

Partnership registration fuels feelings of joy, skepticism

**W**hy do I hear a voice saying, "Be careful what you wish for"? I so wanted House Bill 2007 to go into effect next month. It is. I so hoped that the gay-haters wouldn't get the signatures necessary to put a referendum on the November ballot. They didn't. So why am I even hesitating about registering for Domestic Partnership (capital D, capital P)? The wife and I have been registered as (lowercase) domestic partners for almost a full year now.

Was it less scary to register before because it didn't really mean much? Do the unknowns of a brand new law terrify me because we won't fully understand it until we bump and fall and climb and litigate our way through all of its possible implications?

Yeah. Maybe that's it.

Last week I was feeling a little full of myself. My workplace finally got on board the domestic partner health benefits train. The wife can now go to the doctor just like any of my straight co-workers' spouses. It feels damn good. I started to think, "Things are starting to look up for us homos."

Within the same week I heard about a free evening of legal advice regarding the new DP law. I jumped at the chance to learn more about all the good things a-comin' our way.

And then it hit me: I don't get this at all.

Are we going to have to dissolve our current domestic partnership in order to make the new one legit? What could happen if we don't?



### Out of My Mind

BY MALKA GEFFEN

the wife would indeed still need to adopt our child (of my womb) because we will most likely travel outside Oregon someday. (I know, why would we want to do that?) Say our kid has to go to the hospital while we're visiting friends in Alabama (work with me here). The wife wouldn't necessarily be allowed in with us.

A good deal of the law regards circumstances of partnership dissolution (as in dissolve...a word I associate with Alka-Seltzer, not a relationship). Allen joked, "My suggestion: Everyone stay together." If only life were that simple.

Even harder was all the talk about death. We get standing for wrongful death suits. Yay! We get rights to make burial arrangements. Woo-hoo! I know this is what I wanted. It doesn't make it easier to think about how lucky I am that I have the right to workers' comp benefits should the wife

be killed on the job.

So Jan. 2 is fast approaching. I thought I'd be looking forward to the day and the prospect of protection under the law with pure optimism and joy. But then I think about the new tax filing fun we'll have (filling out a "dummy" joint federal income tax report to send in with our joint state tax forms, for example). Maybe it's the cold, cloudy days. Maybe I just had a birthday, which brings me chocolate and a reminder of mortality. But I can't help wanting more. I can't help but move toward the light of new rights with an ounce of federally unrecognized skepticism.



Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed the domestic partnership bill May 9. Now what?

Can we get our \$60 back for the registration that didn't count?

Will we have to file joint state taxes if we register? Or can we just choose to?

Will the wife still need to adopt our child when I have one?

What if the haters are successful in getting a repeal of the law on the November ballot?

What good is all of this if we still have to pay a lawyer to write up every little thing to protect ourselves?

I learned a lot at the free evening of legal advice hosted by Beth Allen of Allen<sup>2</sup> Law. I was reminded of a few things I already knew, too. For example,

And now I take a deep breath. I'm looking outside from the coziness of my office at the snow falling like confetti at a party. My heart does melt at the thought of how hard we've worked for this and how far we've come. We'll attain many important rights—some we may never have thought to fight for and others that will change our lives. Getting rights and responsibilities may not be my idea of new year's fun or romance, but it's an experiment in democracy I don't want to miss. **jc**

MALKA GEFFEN has plenty of room in her head. Fill it by e-mailing [malkageffen@gmail.com](mailto:malkageffen@gmail.com).