

Freedom to Marry E-Update  
Issue #32 | February 28, 2007

To view the online HTML version of the E-Update, click here -

[http://www.freedomtomarry.org/images/eupdate/eupdate\\_issue32.html](http://www.freedomtomarry.org/images/eupdate/eupdate_issue32.html)

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1) A Note from Evan Wolfson

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Dear friends – I am excited to say the 10th annual observance of Freedom to Marry Week was truly the greatest celebration for marriage equality to date. Nearly one hundred events for the week were registered on our website, we dispersed 17 mini-grants to an exceptionally diverse set of groups across the country, print materials about the freedom to marry were sent to more than 500 groups, and over 100 articles, op-eds, or letters to the editor were published nationwide. Possibly the most ground-breaking success of the week was our utilization of online advertising and dialogue on blogs to convey our message. Nearly 54 million people viewed our internet ads, and thousands logged on to our website – spiking our web traffic to an all-time high – to request information, register events, or download tools to help them in their Freedom to Marry Week activities. Thank you and congratulations to all those who contributed to this year's momentous week.

The dialogue for marriage equality continued with happenings in New Jersey. As civil unions began in New Jersey on February 18, Garden State Equality and others in New Jersey made clear that only the freedom to marry itself would fully protect couples and the fight continues.

Weighing in on why civil unions are not equal to marriage, the Hartford Courant

highlighted my

argument that legislators have to ask themselves a simple question: Either civil unions and

marriages are the same - in which case why do we need two lines at the clerk's office? Or

they're not the same, in which case what is the government withholding from these couples and

their kids?

As you can't help noticing, the 2008 election is already upon us, and marriage equality and

fairness for all families is in the spotlight, alongside Iraq, healthcare, and other weighty

concerns. Pam's House Blend presents an excellent overview of what the presidential candidates

are saying thus far: either denying equal rights all-together or using the separate and unequal

civil unions as a cop out, a solution to an issue they do not want to deal with in their

campaigns. Since politicians rarely lead the way on social justice, it is up to all of us who

care about what kind of country we have to make the case and do the heavy lifting, creating the

space in which candidates and electeds can rise. This early in the debates, it is time to make

the case for why marriage matters. We can get others to talk and think about this, and they

will move faster if we tell them why we care, rather than begin by saying we don't.

- Evan Wolfson

Follow developments in the movement for marriage equality on our website

([www.freedomtomarry.org](http://www.freedomtomarry.org)), and in future issues of Freedom to Marry's bi-monthly E-Update.

LINKS:

\*The New York Times:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/20/nyregion/20civil.html?\\_r=1&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&adxnnlx=11721](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/20/nyregion/20civil.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&adxnnlx=11721)

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\*Garden State Equality: <http://www.gardenstateequality.org/>

\*Hartford Courant:

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<http://www.courant.com/features/lifestyle/hc-letsbecivil.artfeb22,0,6977120.story>

\*Pam's House Blend:

<http://www.pamshouseblend.com/showDiary.do;jsessionid=1341F4FF158554920AB9AE922E70BF6A?diaryId=>

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2) Civil Unions in New Jersey  
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February 18th marked the first day in New Jersey that same-sex couples were allowed to apply

for civil unions. Although civil unions remain a separate, intermediate step apart from

marriage, many New Jerseyans celebrated the rights gained by civil unions. On Wednesday,

February 21st in Asbury Park, a Jersey shore town with a thriving and active gay community, two

couples were joined in after-midnight ceremonies at a party sponsored by Garden State Equality

and the jersey shore Q spot .

The event was part ceremony, part political rally. Two couples, joined by a room full of gay

and non-gay well-wishers, were read two sets of vows. First, the Rev. Bob Krieset asked the

couples – Thomas Mannix and Kevin Pilla, Degen Schubert and Mark Rado – to vow to continue

fighting for marriage equality. Then Mayor Kevin Sanders officiated in the exchange of civil

union vows. Being able to celebrate gaining some rights was a cherished affair for those

involved, but all present were definitely aware of the second-class citizenship which is

perpetuated with civil unions, and the need for us to continue fighting for nothing less than

the freedom to marry.

LINKS:

\*New York Times:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/20/nyregion/20civil.html?\\_r=1&adxn1=1&oref=slogin&adxn1x=11721](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/20/nyregion/20civil.html?_r=1&adxn1=1&oref=slogin&adxn1x=11721)

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\*Garden State Equality: <http://www.gardenstateequality.org/>

\*jersey shore Q spot: <http://www.jsqspot.org/>

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### 3) Rhode Island Attorney General Recognizes Same-Sex Marriages

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Just last Wednesday, Rhode Island Attorney General Patrick C. Lynch wrote an opinion supporting

marriage recognition in Rhode Island which said, "It is our opinion based on all of the

foregoing that whether based on Full Faith and Credit or on principles of Comity, Rhode Island

will recognize same-sex marriages lawfully performed in Massachusetts as marriage in Rhode

Island." The opinion was highlighted in a New York Times article on February 22nd. We need to

encourage others to see that it makes more sense to respect couples' marriages, rather than

destabilize them.

#### LINKS:

\*New York Times: [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/22/us/22rhode.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/22/us/22rhode.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

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### 4) Connecticut and Illinois Introduce Marriage Equality Legislation

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Last Thursday, Illinois State Representative Greg Harris introduced a bill to end same-sex

couples' exclusion from marriage. In the Chicago Tribune Rep. Harris said, "Illinois is a

heartland state but has always been a leader in civil rights and social justice issues. It's

the right thing to do." When asked why Rep. Harris wrote a bill for equal marriage instead of

civil unions, he said, "marriage is the fully equal term and that's where we want to begin."

Similar legislation is pending in Connecticut, and a recent barrage of pro-marriage equality

editorials and articles (Hartford Courant, New Haven Independent, Hartford Courant)

along with

positive polling results (Quinnipiac Poll) show the positive momentum is building. According to

State Rep. Mike Lawlor, passage of the bill is “inevitable” because civil unions are separate

and unequal, and just not good enough. Governor Rell has promised to veto a marriage equality

bill, but Lawlor believes there is still hope to persuade her to sign marriage equality into

law.

LINKS:

\*Chicago Tribune:

<http://www.topix.net/content/trb/1880924033303983890114910656661885849173>

\*Hartford Courant:

<http://www.courant.com/features/lifestyle/hc-susan0225.artfeb25,0,1899678.column?coll=hc-utilit>

y-features-life

\*New Haven Independent:

[http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2007/02/lawlor\\_calls\\_ga.php](http://www.newhavenindependent.org/archives/2007/02/lawlor_calls_ga.php)

\*Hartford Courant:

<http://www.courant.com/features/lifestyle/hc-susan0211.artfeb11,0,6164109.column?coll=hc-utilit>

y-features-life

\*Quinnipiac Poll: [http://www.lmfct.org/site/MessageViewer?em\\_id=10421.0&d1v\\_id=10501](http://www.lmfct.org/site/MessageViewer?em_id=10421.0&d1v_id=10501)

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5) Evan Wolfson Debates Again in New York

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Pace Law School hosts “Should State Legislatures Approve Same-Sex Marriages” on Wednesday,

March 14, 2007 at 7 p.m. in the Pace Law School New York State Judicial Institute Lecture Hall.

The featured speakers will be our very own Executive Director, Evan Wolfson, and David

Blankenhorn, founder and president of the Institute for American Values. Attendance is free and

open to the public. To register online, visit [www.law.pace.edu/pp1s](http://www.law.pace.edu/pp1s) or call 914-422-4123

LINKS:

\*Pace Law School: <http://law.pace.edu/News/ppls/future.html>

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QUOTE:

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"Now we need to talk about why civil unions aren't good enough."

- CT State Rep. Mike Lawlor

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OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST:

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We welcome Two New Prominent Voices of Equality!

Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley has earned a national reputation for his innovative, community-based programs to address education, public safety, neighborhood development and

other challenges facing American cities. Showing his support for marriage equality, in 2004

Mayor Richard Daley said he would have "no problem" with the county clerk's office following in

the steps of San Francisco and issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples because same-sex

couples "love each other just as much as anyone else."

Dakota Fine, 24, based in Washington, DC, is employed by the Human Rights Campaign, division of

Public Education and Outreach. Dakota has been an outspoken and valued member of the VOE/COLAGE

radio tour, speaking out across our nation on behalf of our families.

LINKS:

\*Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley: <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=5439>

\*Dakota Fine: <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/document.asp?id=5430>

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Learning from European Unions to Advance Marriage Equality

On Monday, February 26, 2007, the Williams Institute and Cardozo School of Law co-sponsored

European Unions: What Can the U.S. Learn From Europe About Extending Marriage to Gay and

Lesbian Couples? The Honorable Boris Dittrich, a former member of the Parliament of the

Netherlands, discussed his six years of legislative leadership to pass the world's first

legislation extending marriage to same-sex couples. Professor William Eskridge, a professor at

Yale Law School, presented findings based on two years of research in Denmark, from his

recently-published book Gay Marriage: For Better or Worse? What We've Learned from the

Evidence, written with co-author Darren Spedale.

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Alaskan Legislature Attempts to Defy Courts and Pursue Inequality

The Alaskan legislature is continuing to pursue inequality against an Alaskan Supreme Court

ruling to uphold dependent benefits for same-sex coupled government employees. Alaskans

Together, a statewide, bi-partisan group of people working together to defeat the benefit ban -

and uphold the fundamental principle of Equal Pay for Equal work - is leading the fight against

the Alaskan legislature's advisory vote on April 3, 2007, to place a benefit ban on the 2008

ballot. A 2008 ballot initiative would open the door to writing discrimination into the state

Constitution. Visit Alaskans Together to learn more.

LINKS:

\*Alaskans Together: <http://www.alaskanstogether.com/>

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Most visited pages last week:

\*Get Informed - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=2045>

\*E-Update Issue #31 Online -

[http://www.freedomtomarry.org/images/eupdate/eupdate\\_issue31.html](http://www.freedomtomarry.org/images/eupdate/eupdate_issue31.html)

\*The Story Center - <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/node.asp?id=2043>

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Do you want the latest marriage equality news from Freedom to Marry in your news



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[http://www.freedomtomarry.org/e\\_update.asp](http://www.freedomtomarry.org/e_update.asp)

Pass it on!

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Let us know what's going on in your community to advance the cause. Email the editor at

[editor1@freedomtomarry.org](mailto:editor1@freedomtomarry.org).