



National Gay and Lesbian Task Force hails historic California Supreme Court decision supporting the freedom to marry

May 15, 2008

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- **Rea Carey, Acting Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**

WASHINGTON, May 15 - The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force hails today's historic decision by the California Supreme Court that the California Constitution requires ending the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage. The Task Force filed an amicus brief with the high court supporting full marriage rights for same-sex couples.

Statement by Rea Carey, Acting Executive Director National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

"This is an extraordinary victory for Californians and all Americans who hold fairness and opportunity as fundamental American values. Thank you California for standing up for safety, respect and dignity for our families. In 1948, California became the first state to strike down anti-miscegenation laws and in 1999 it was the first to establish statewide domestic partnerships. Today, once again, California is leading the way in affirming the inherent dignity of all people. Today, in our hearts, we are all Californians.

"The high court's decision comes down to this simple yet profound principle: All Californians should be treated equally under the law.

"We thank the plaintiffs for their tremendous courage and our colleagues at the National Center for Lesbian Rights and their cooperating counsel for outstanding legal advocacy on behalf of our community. We also applaud the years of work undertaken by our state partner, Equality California, and all of the organizations involved in the Let California Ring coalition, which played a pivotal role in creating a climate in California that made today's historic decision possible."

Background

Today's decision overturns a ruling by the California Court of Appeals, which had reversed a trial court's decision that the California Constitution forbids the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage. California first established statewide domestic partnerships in 1999 and greatly expanded them in 2005 to include broad family recognition. In 2005 and 2007, the California Legislature passed measures that would have ended the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage, but Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the legislation both times, saying the California Supreme Court should resolve the constitutional questions presented by California's discriminatory marriage laws. With today's decision, California joins Massachusetts in extending

full marriage rights to same-sex couples. Five additional states (Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oregon and Vermont) provide broad family recognition to same-sex couples through civil unions or domestic partnerships.

Our commitment to California

The Task Force Foundation and Task Force Action Fund have heavily invested in efforts to attain marriage rights in California. The Action Fund is currently working with the Equality for All campaign against a proposed state constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex couples from marrying in California. In addition, the Action Fund has:

Organized the Equality Calls project in 2006, which recruited hundreds of volunteers across the state to call thousands of members of LGBT groups and progressive allies and educate them about the importance of the freedom to marry.

Contributed \$170,000 total since 2005 to support Equality for All in its efforts to prepare to defeat an anti-same-sex marriage constitutional amendment.

The Task Force Foundation has:

Held two Power Summits in California, one in 2005 and one in 2007, which trained more than 170 leaders and volunteers in the fundamentals of fundraising, volunteer recruitment and speaking persuasively to promote the freedom to marry in California.

Worked closely with Equality California to assist in assembling an impressive coalition of over 45 national, statewide and local organizations to support a statewide public education campaign promoting the freedom to marry known as Let California Ring.

Implemented a Southern California House Party strategy to build support for marriage rights.

Dedicated its four full-time organizers based in the Task Force's California office to take a key role with field efforts around the state since 2006.

Contributed nearly \$30,000 in cash to support statewide public education efforts.