

ADVOCATE.COM

Groups Advise Out-of-State Newlyweds Not to Sue

June 11, 2008

Four LGBT legal groups and five LGBT advocacy groups released a statement Tuesday directed to out-of-state couples planning to travel to California to marry: Celebrate your California marriage with family and friends, but don't go back to your home state and file a lawsuit demanding that your state recognize your union.

The advisory, titled "Make Change, Not Lawsuits," addresses eight questions gays and lesbians may have regarding marriage and outlines a strategy to expand same-sex marriage throughout the nation.

"Pushing the federal government before we have a critical mass of states recognizing same-sex relationships or suing in states where the courts aren't ready is likely to get us bad rulings. Bad rulings will make it much more difficult for us to win marriage and will certainly make it take much longer," the statement reads.

The advisory claims that the best way for same-sex couples to achieve the right to marry throughout the country is within state courts and state legislatures, the means used in California and Massachusetts, respectively.

"When we've won in a critical mass of states, we can turn to Congress and the federal courts. At that point, we'll ask that the U.S. government treat all marriages equally. And we'll ask that all states give equal treatment to all marriages and civil unions that are celebrated in other states."

The advisory was signed by legal groups the American Civil Liberties Union Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Project, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, Lambda Legal, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and by advocacy groups the Equality Federation, Freedom to Marry, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, the Human Rights Campaign, and the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**.