

LGBT Groups Issue Warning To Out-Of-State Couples Marrying In Calif.

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Four LGBT legal organizations and five other leading national LGBT groups issued a warning Tuesday to couples planning to go to California to marry that they should not use their marriages to fight for recognition in federal court.

"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 groups said.

"If you're ready and it's right for you, get married in California. If you do, claim the name and act like what you are married. But don't go suing right away. Most lawsuits will likely set us all back," the statement said.

The groups said that there are other ways to fight which are more likely to win.

The statement said that the fastest way to win the freedom to marry throughout America is by getting marriage through state courts and state legislatures.

"We need to start with states where we have the best odds of winning," the advisory said.

"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 statement also issued other warnings.

"If you are in the military, on a visa, thinking about adopting or getting government benefits, you should talk to a lawyer who knows that area, or get in touch with one of the legal organizations."

Last month the California Supreme Court struck down the state ban on same-sex marriage. The ruling goes into effect on June 17, although some clerks will begin issuing licenses after 5:30 pm the day before.

Unlike Massachusetts which limits the issuing of licenses to couples only from states where their marriages would be legal the California ruling opens gay marriage to any couple. Thousands of gay and lesbian couples from across the country are expected to take advantage of the ruling.

The advisory issued Tuesday was signed by four LGBT legal groups – the ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Project, the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), Lambda Legal, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) – and five other LGBT organizations: the Equality Federation, Freedom to Marry, the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the Human Rights Campaign, and the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**.