

## **LGBT groups urge community not to sue over Cali marriages**

by Ethan Jacobs  
associate editor  
Tuesday Jun 10, 2008

As *Bay Windows* reported last month, a national coalition of four LGBT legal groups and five other LGBT advocacy groups are urging members of the community not to rush into lawsuits once same-sex couples begin marrying in California on June 17. Today those groups released a six-page statement outlining the potential pitfalls for the marriage equality movement if couples sue either the federal government or governments in other states for recognition of same-sex marriages performed in California:

But one thing couples shouldn't do is just sue the federal government or, if they are from other states, go sue their home state or their employer to recognize their marriage or open up the health plan. 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 gives couples tips for laying the groundwork for marriage equality without going to court:

Simply getting married and telling people will help get those conversations going. But you shouldn't stop there. The win in California was no accident. Cities in California started adopting Domestic Partnership policies in the mid 80s. The state adopted its first law in 1999, and expanded it over the next six years. Courts in California have been deciding important cases about discrimination since the 70s. With the victories in Massachusetts and California, we should be able to win marriage more quickly in other states. But we still need to lay the groundwork. Ask your employer to include your spouse in the health and benefit plans; ask them to do a domestic partnership policy if they decline. Ask your town to establish a local domestic partnership registry. These are some of the concrete tasks and tactics that people can do that will create the climate for the advances we all want, rather than rolling the dice on litigation.

The groups signing onto the statement include Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), Lambda Legal, National Center for Lesbian Rights, ACLU, HRC, the **National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, GLAAD, Freedom to Marry, and the Equality Federation.