

# Vermont Legalizes Gay Marriage with Override of Governor's Veto

Vermont has become the fourth state to legalize gay marriage, and the first to do so through its legislature, overriding the Vermont Governor's earlier veto by a comfortable margin in the state Senate, and a squeaker in the House.

Gov. Jim Douglas vetoed the legislation that extended full marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples, calling it a distraction at a time when the state was facing increasing job losses and financial difficulty.

The vote was 23-5 to override in the state Senate and 100-49 to override in the House. Under Vermont law, two-thirds of each chamber had to vote for override.

"This is another step on the road to full LGBT marriage equality in all states," said Ed Bennett, president of Sacramento's Stonewall Democrats. "We should celebrate each and every victory as we move toward federally recognized equality."

Vermont becomes the first state to legalize gay marriage through the legislative process. Massachusetts, Connecticut and most recently Iowa have legalized gay marriage through decisions by their supreme courts. California has twice approved gay marriage through its legislature, only to have the measures vetoed.

Former Vermont Rep. Robert Dostis, and his longtime partner Chuck Kletecka, were among the celebrants of the veto override,

prompting marriage plans for the couple of 25 years.

"It's been a very long battle. It's been almost 20 years to get to this point," Dostis was quoted as saying in an article in the Burlington Free Press.com. "I think finally, most people in Vermont understand that we're a couple like any other couple. We're as good and as bad as any other group of people. And now I think we have a chance to prove ourselves here on forward that we're good members of our community."

News of the override brought accolades from many gay marriage rights groups.

"We are thrilled that the Vermont Legislature has taken decisive action to end discrimination against same-sex couples in marriage," said Shannon Minter, Legal Director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights. "Following on the heels of a unanimous decision by the Iowa Supreme Court in the Iowa marriage case last week, today's news from Vermont is yet another indication that Proposition 8 is out of step with our nation's movement toward equality."

"We salute the courage and

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commitment of the Vermont state legislative leadership in pursuing this measure's passage – even successfully overriding the governor's veto," Rea Carey, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "We especially extend our heartfelt thanks to Vermont Freedom to Marry for its hard work and tireless advocacy for the freedom to marry."

