

Colorado Senate Passes Civil Union Legislation

The Colorado Senate approved legislation today that would hand out even more marriage-like benefits to same-sex couples. The civil union bill passed 23-12 and now heads to the GOP-controlled House.

Gay activists and their allies say the bill is needed to protect the legal rights of gay couples, including: the right to be involved in medical decisions affecting partners; the right to visit a partner in the hospital; the right to inherit property from a partner after a death; and the right to survivors' benefits or workers' compensation claims.

However, all of those rights—and more—already are provided under the state's Designated Beneficiaries Agreement Act of 2009, making the new legislation unnecessary.

"That they're now lobbying for a bill that's redundant in existing law demonstrates that SB 172 is more about redefining marriage than hospital visitation and property ownership," says Carrie Gordon Earll, senior director of issue analysis at CitizenLink. "Civil unions are marriage under another name. Marriage should be protected for what it gives to children—their best chance at a married mom and dad."

In 2006, Colorado voters amended the state Constitution to protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman. That same year, they also rejected domestic partnerships.

"Many of us—CitizenLink included—support the right of unmarried persons to have who they want by their bedside at the hospital," Earll said. "People need to know they already have that right — along with many others."