

Arkansas Judge Rules for Same-Sex Partners on Birth Certificates

The state of Arkansas must record the names of both partners in a same-sex marriage on the birth certificates of their children, a judge ruled on Monday.

Three lesbian couples had challenged the refusal of the Arkansas Health Department's Vital Statistics Bureau to identify them as the adoptive or biological parents of their respective children.

Monday's order applies only to the three couples who brought suit. They claimed they were unconstitutionally denied the treatment afforded heterosexual parents, including unmarried parents.

Circuit Judge Tim Fox of Little Rock, who ruled from the bench, said he would consider broadening his finding to include all same-sex couples with children in Arkansas, and issue a written decision later.

"He made it pretty clear where he's going," said Cheryl Maples, attorney for the plaintiffs.

"It's another step forward for gay couples," Maples said, "and I'm sure the next step is right around the corner."

The couples, all married, filed suit after the U.S. Supreme Court in June made same-sex marriage legal nationwide.

The state resisted on largely technical grounds, arguing that the issue was not same-sex marriage but long-established regulations governing the identification of biological and adoptive parents on official documents.

The state said the policy could be changed only by the Arkansas Health Board or by the legislature.

A spokesman for Attorney General Leslie Rutledge said she would await the judge's ruling on the broader question before deciding whether to appeal. {eo}

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