

Pennsylvania Governor Criticized for Comparing Gay Marriage to Incest

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett drew fire on Friday when he compared gay marriage to incest only weeks after he apologized for a state legal filing comparing **same-sex marriage** to the marriage of children.

Asked to comment on a case in which a Pennsylvania court last month ordered a county clerk to stop issuing marriage licenses, Corbett apologized for an earlier claim by the state that it does not allow gay couples to marry in the same way that it does not allow 12-year-olds to marry.

"I think the appropriate analogy would have been brother and sister, don't you?" Corbett, a Republican, told an interview on WHP television.

The comment drew a swift critical response from inside and outside the state.

"Tom Corbett's absurd comparison of same-sex marriage to the marriage of a brother and sister is offensive and demeaning to the millions of Pennsylvania families he claims to represent," said Vermont Gov. Peter Shumlin, who chairs the Democratic Governor's Association.

Vermont is among the 13 U.S. states, in addition to the District of Columbia, that currently allow **gay marriage**.

Pennsylvania is one of several U.S. states where gay marriage advocates are battling for the right to wed.

Following a June U.S. Supreme Court decision that knocked down a part of the 1996 federal **Defense of Marriage Act** that defined marriages as the union of a man and a woman,

Pennsylvania's Montgomery County Register of Wills D. Bruce Hanes began issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

He asserted that the **Supreme Court** decision also meant that Pennsylvania laws blocking gay nuptials was unconstitutional. A state court last month ordered him to stop issuing the licenses and the county has appealed that decision to the state Supreme Court.

U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz, who has entered a crowded Democratic field seeking to challenge Corbett in the 2014 general election, called Corbett's statements "hateful."

Corbett's office issued a statement a few hours later, saying his statement was not intended to offend. He apologized to anyone who was.

"I explained that current Pennsylvania statute delineates categories of individuals unable to obtain a marriage license," Corbett said. "As an example, I cited siblings as one such category, which is clearly defined in state law. My intent was to provide an example of these categories."

Pennsylvania is among six states targeted by same sex marriage proponents for a push to legalize same-sex marriage, according to Freedom to Marry, an advocacy group.

The state has seen a flurry of legal activity in recent months.

In federal court, advocates have challenged the state's ban on same sex marriage as unconstitutional, a suit that Democratic Attorney General Kathleen Kane said she would not contest. Another federal court case, this one filed in Philadelphia, seeks to force the state to recognize same sex marriages from other states.

