

Wisconsin Court Rules in Favor of Same-Sex Domestic Registry

An appeals court ruled on Friday that Wisconsin's same-sex domestic partnership registry does not violate an amendment to the state constitution banning **gay marriage**.

The registry gives same-sex couples limited rights and benefits.

"Domestic partnerships carry with them substantially fewer rights and obligations than those enjoyed by and imposed on married couples," the three-judge Wisconsin panel wrote in its ruling.

The registry gives the right to hospital visits, family medical leave to care for a stricken partner, health benefits under a partner's insurance, and the right to inherit assets when a partner dies.

While the state's Department of Health Services continues to administer the registry, Governor Scott Walker and Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen, both Republicans, have refused to defend it in court, claiming it is unconstitutional.

The registry, created in 2009 under Democratic Governor Jim Doyle, has more than 2,000 couples on it, according to Fair Wisconsin, a gay-rights organization based in Madison.

"We fought off this ugly attack against the rights and protections currently available to same-sex couples and their families in Wisconsin—a sweet holiday present to loving couples and families," said Christopher Clark, an attorney with Lambda Legal, a national group that advocates for gays and lesbians.

In 2006, Wisconsin voters approved a referendum to add an amendment to the state constitution prohibiting **gay marriage**. Wisconsin Family Action, an anti-gay rights group, argued in a 2010 lawsuit that the registry violated the amendment because it resembles a marriage under state law.

“The people of Wisconsin have strongly affirmed the lifelong, faithful union of a man and a woman as the fundamental building block of civilization,” said Julaine Appling, president of Wisconsin Family Action, in a statement.

The case was brought to the Court of Appeals after a Dane County judge ruled against the Wisconsin Family Action lawsuit in June 2011.

The U.S. Supreme Court announced earlier this month it will hear gay marriage cases for the first time as **gay rights** continues to be a politically charged topic through the United States.

Same-sex marriage is prohibited in 31 states while nine states and Washington D.C. have legalized it, including three by referendum in the November election.

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