

Women's Advocates Hail Supreme Court Marriage Rulings, Vow to Win Equality in Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, PA, June 26, 2013 – Today, lawyers from the Women's Law Project, a non-profit women's legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, applauded today's Supreme Court marriage decisions.

"A majority of the Supreme Court has held that the federal Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional," said Carol E. Tracy, Executive Director of the Women's Law Project. "DOMA refused to recognize the legal marriages of same-sex couples, and this refusal amounts to unconstitutional discrimination against these couples. Same-sex couples who are legally married must now be treated the same under federal law as opposite-sex married couples. That is a tremendous victory," she concluded.

"Today's historic rulings strike a long-overdue blow for human dignity," said Susan Frietsche, staff attorney with the Women's Law Project's western Pennsylvania office in Pittsburgh. "By recognizing the legitimacy of same-sex relationships, these rulings are also an important step in dismantling harmful sex-role stereotypes and ending gender-based oppression." Tracy and Frietsche noted, however, that the Court stopped short of ruling that the Constitution requires all states to allow same-sex couples to marry.

"In states like Pennsylvania, which still does not even accord basic protections against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations to LGBT people, there is work to be done to bring today's victory home," said Tracy. She pledged the Women's Law Project's resources to winning the fight for marriage equality in this state.

Tracy stated that the Women's Law Project, which celebrates its 40th anniversary next year, has a long history of advocacy in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights. "We played a leading role in Pennsylvania's recognition of second-parent adoption for same-sex couples, in ensuring that same-sex partners have the right to petition for visitation and partial custody of the children they are raising, and in fighting discrimination against transgender people," she said.

Frietsche noted that the Women's Law Project is proud to present Evan Wolfson, the Executive Director of Freedom to Marry, at an upcoming briefing on today's decisions. The free event, co-sponsored by the Allegheny County Bar Association's LGBT Rights Committee and the Women's Law Project, will be held on Friday, July 12, from 4:00-6:00 PM in downtown Pittsburgh, location TBA. For more information, visit www.womenslawproject.org or call 412-281-2892.

"We'll be discussing next steps on the road to marriage equality, including how to win full legal protection against discrimination against LGBT people," she concluded.

The mission of the Women's Law Project is to create a more just and equitable society by advancing the rights and status of all women throughout their lives. To this end, we engage in high-impact litigation, advocacy, and education.