



Gay adoption bill advances in Senate

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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DENVER - A bill that would allow gay couples to adopt children together advanced in the Senate on Wednesday, despite Republican criticism that the aim was to promote a "homosexual agenda" rather than help children.

The Senate gave initial backing to the proposal (House Bill 1330), which has already been approved by the House. It still must pass another vote in the Senate before it could be sent to the governor.

Current state law allows gay individuals to adopt but not same-sex partners. Married couples are already allowed to adopt each other's children as stepparents.

The new proposal simulates the stepparent adoption process for same-sex partners and other unmarried couples.

Sen. Jennifer Veiga, D-Denver, said children are already living in same-sex households and having two legal parents would make them eligible for such benefits as health insurance benefits and Social Security payments. She also said it would allow the state to require child support payments if the couple breaks up.

Sen. Shawn Mitchell, R-Broomfield, said those parents can already draw up contracts to protect inheritance rights of their children or buy life insurance.

"What's involved here is the symbolic politics of asking Colorado to endorse same-sex households as the same as any other family," he said.

Veiga said that parents can draw up contracts to say who should inherit their estate, for example, but those contracts can always be challenged in court. Some benefits cannot be willed to a child, including Social Security and worker compensation payments.

Sen. Dave Schultheis, R-Colorado Springs, said he feared that allowing gay adoption would pave the way to a judge deciding that same-sex couples should be allowed to have civil unions.

"It's not about the children at all. It's about furthering this homosexual agenda and about attempting to continue to narrow the gap between marriage and the concept of a homosexual union," he said.

Veiga said no one is being forced to accept gay couples.

"This is about recognizing the reality that alternative families exist," she said.

Ten states and the District of Columbia allow second-parent adoptions either because of laws or statewide appellate court rulings, according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

It's also allowed by trial courts in some jurisdictions in 15 other states. Colorado is one of four states where appellate courts have ruled that second-parent adoption isn't allowed under current law.