

## Gay adoption battle mirrors marriage wars

10 states plus D.C. now allow second same-sex parent to adopt

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By ELIZABETH PERRY

Colorado has become the 10th state in the nation to allow second-parent adoptions through statute or case law, the latest move in a state-by-state gay rights battle that mirrors the same-sex marriage wars.

Gov. Bill Ritter signed House Bill 1330 into law May 14. In a statement released by the governor's office, Ritter, who served as Denver district attorney for 12 years, said the law gives children a better chance to succeed.

"From my experience in law enforcement, I know how important it is for children to grow up in a stable environment," he said. "This law gives children in a one-parent family a chance to grow up in a two-parent home. We must do all we can to strengthen families and provide children with as stable an environment as possible."

Colorado joins California, Connecticut, Vermont, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania in allowing same-sex parents to adopt the children of their partners. Trial courts in 15 other states, including Maryland, have also granted second-parent rights.

Ohio and Wisconsin have ruled that state law prohibits second-parent adoption in same-sex couples. There are still four states — Nebraska, Florida, Mississippi and Utah — that do not allow gay individual or couples to adopt or foster children.

Despite a setback in January when Florida's appellate court upheld the American Civil Liberty Union's challenge to the ban, a recent St. Petersburg Times article reported the ACLU is mounting another challenge with help from state lawmakers and The Coalition For Fair Adoption.

"We're coming back this year," Democratic Sen. Nan Rich of Weston told the Times. "Every child needs and deserves a permanent, loving home."

**Kara Suffredini, state legislative director of the Task Force, said the Colorado law is an example of the proactive measures being passed to protect children.**

**"The broad relationship recognition laws passed this year in New Jersey, Oregon and New Hampshire also protect LGBT parents and their children," she said. "Because they afford the same presumption of legal parentage of children of the relationship as married couples enjoy."**

Conservative religious groups that lobbied against the second-parent bill in Colorado were disappointed to see it pass. Catholic Charities, Focus on the Family and the Colorado Family Institute were some of the bill's more vocal opponents.

Family Institute President and CEO Jim Pfaff said the bill was created without the input of adoption agencies. He also said the governor has "broken faith with the adoption community in order to meet the goals of a narrow interest group."

“Governor Ritter has abandoned the principle of the family right out of the gate,” Pfaff said. “This has unfortunately set the stage for how his is likely to govern for the rest of his term. We are greatly disappointed. Adoption agencies warned that the effects of this legislation would not be limited to joint homosexual adoption. They also pointed to flaws in the language which might provide a potential for abuse of the system in general.”

Catholic Charities in Boston closed the doors of its adoption services agency to avoid placing children with gay couples and the Colorado office reiterated its stance in a strongly worded public statement published on the Catholic World News web site in 2006.

“Children deserve to be placed into homes centered around a wife and mother and a husband and father,” said James Mauch, president of Denver Catholic Charities. “Human history has amply shown that children thrive best when they grow in such a family. In offering adoptive services, Catholic Charities has consistently maintained this position.”

Another voice of opposition within the Catholic Church comes from the Vatican. Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, issued a statement a year ago calling gay adoption “an act of moral violence” against a child.

Despite the Vatican official’s strong disapproval, not all Catholic Charities organizations are falling in line with Rome on the matter. A recent article in the Bay Area Reporter alleges Catholic Charities of San Francisco has placed children with five gay couples since 2001.

After Trujillo denounced same-sex adoptions, the San Francisco office found a way to get around the Vatican’s position. The organization partnered its adoption services with a gay-friendly adoption agency called Family Builders by Adoption. According to the Boston Globe, Brian Cahill, executive director of Catholic Charities of San Francisco, said Catholic organizations cannot directly place children in gay households. San Francisco Archbishop George Niederauer called the practice a type of “remote” cooperation that conforms to Catholic moral teaching.

Now a year later, Family Builders has teamed up again with Catholic Charities San Francisco to debut a new ad campaign designed to attract gay couples. The Reporter said the campaign kicked off May 21 consisting of posters of parents and their adopted children alongside slogans stating “Family Planning,” “Intelligent Design” and “Our Family was no accident — we planned for it.” The City of San Francisco footed part of the \$100,000 bill for the campaign.