



## Spitzer's Fall Could Threaten NY Gay Marriage

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Although a few days ago GLBT advocates were reportedly optimistic that marriage equality in New York state might have an even better chance of advancing in the event of Eliot Spitzer's resignation as governor, the reality of Spitzer's ouster has made all such guesswork seem more uncertain.

Spitzer, who campaigned in 2006 partly on a promise to promote GLBT equality, including marriage equality, in the Empire State, had developed an adversarial relationship with state lawmakers.

When the news broke Mar. 10 that Spitzer had been implicated in a federal investigation involving shell companies, money transfers to a high-end prostitution ring, and alleged meetings with escorts, GLBT families were shocked that the champion of their families' equality could be involved, especially since Spitzer had made a name for himself prior to winning the gubernatorial race for cracking down hard on corruption.

But even as Spitzer stood embattled in a swirl of accusations and political grandstanding, including demands for his immediate resignation and threats of impeachment proceedings, GLBT leaders saw that Lt. Governor David Paterson had a strong GLBT record behind him, and a more amiable working relationship with state lawmakers.

Marriage equality in New York has long been in process. In 2007, the Assembly approved a measure to extend full marriage rights to all New York state residents, and even though the state senate refused to allow the measure to advance, it was far from dead.

**The Washington Blade carried a Mar. 14 story in which the executive director of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, Matt Foreman, said, "If there is any consolation to this very sad story, it's that David Paterson would become governor."**

Paterson's record of standing up for GLBT equality extends back to his days as a Harlem civil rights proponent. In 2006, Paterson stated in an Blade interview, "I'm not going to be in that [marriage equality] fight, I'm going to be in front of that fight."

With Spitzer's Mar. 12 resignation, Paterson becomes New York's governor, and finds himself in that very position, "in front of that fight."

GLBT leaders look to Paterson with faith in his abilities. The Blade quoted Alan Van Capelle, the Empire State Pride Agenda's executive director, as saying, "I want all of you to know that our community will continue to have an ally and a friend in the Governor of New York--one who has been a strong supporter of all our key issues, and one that is committed to winning a pro-LGBT majority in the State Senate" in this year's general election.

Gay City News reported in a Mar. 12 story that Paterson received credit from various GLBT leaders for the Assembly's approval of the marriage equality bill.

Gay City news quoted Paterson from an interview Paterson gave that publication in 2006, in which Paterson said, "When I was growing up nobody was openly gay."

Paterson went on, "If they appeared to be gay they got ridiculed with all sorts of epithets."

Said Paterson, who is set to become New York's first African-American governor, "I'm a human being and I once felt as they did."

Nonetheless, it is a loss to the GLBT community to see Spitzer step down, particularly in a manner reminiscent of a number of recent missteps by Republican lawmakers.

David Vitter, Republican Senator of LA, found himself for a time embroiled in a very similar scandal when his name was linked to an alleged madam reportedly running a prostitution ring in the Washington, D.C. area.

Anti-gay Republican lawmaker Larry Craig was arrested for, and pleaded guilty to, allegedly coming on to a male undercover law enforcement officer in an airport restroom.

The taint of hypocrisy in these cases, as well as in the scandal that wept Spitzer from office, was credited with giving the allegations the force required to take Spitzer out of office, even though Vitter and Craig have both clung to power.

**The Blade quoted Foreman as saying, "The entire situation is extremely unfortunate."**

**Continued Foreman, "Were it not for the that he prosecuted prostitution rings when he was attorney general, there would be no reason for him to resign."**

Still, marriage advocates look to Paterson with confidence, reported the Blade.

Freedom to Marry's executive director, Evan Wolfson, was cited by the Blade article as expressing the belief that despite the circumstances surrounding Spitzer's resignation, marriage equality legislation was not necessarily going to be unnecessarily encumbered.