Marriage: What Are We Fighting For?

According to the federal government's General Accounting Office, there are more than 1,049 automatic federal and additional state protections, benefits and responsibilities that accompany civil marriage. It's critical to understand what's at stake.

MARRIAGE BENEFITS:

A heterosexual married couple receives:	A same-sex couple receives:
☑ Access to Social Security after spouse's death	☐
☑ Access to health insurance through spouse's workplace	☐
☑ The right to custody of children after divorce	☐
☑ Visitation rights for non-biological children	☐
☑ Joint parenting rights, such as access to children's school records	☐
☑ Bereavement leave after death of a spouse	☐
☑ Burial determination after the death of a spouse	☐
☑ Domestic violence intervention	☐
☑ Sick leave to care for spouse or non-biological child	☐
☑ Legal validation of a long-term relationship	☐
☑ Ability to live in neighborhoods deemed "families only"	☐
☑ Access to life insurance in spouse's workplace	☐
☑ Access to survivor benefits in case of emergency	☐
☑ Access to spouse's crime victim's recovery benefits	☐
☑ Ability to file wrongful death claims	☐
☑ Right to shared property, child support, and alimony after divorce	☐
☑ Ability to file joint home and auto insurance policies	☐
☑ Joint rental leases with automatic renewal rights if spouse dies or leaves	☐
☑ Access to adopting children	☐
☑ Automatic inheritance of shared assets after spouse's death	☐
☑ Automatic inheritance of retirement savings tax-free after spouse's death	☐
☑ Automatic exemption of property tax increases on shared assets gained after spouse's death	☐
☑ Ability to file joint tax returns	☐
☑ Access to tax breaks for married couples	☐
☑ Veterans discounts based on spouse's armed forces status	☐
☑ Assumption of spouse's pension after death	☐
☑ Ability to file joint bankruptcy	☐
☑ Ability to collect unemployment benefits after leaving a job to relocate because of spouse's job move	☐
☑ Ability to transfer property from one spouse to another without transfer tax consequences	☐
☑ Access to fostering children	☐
☑ Automatic next-of-kin status for emergency medical decisions and hospital visitation status	☐
☑ Immigration and residency priority for spouses from other countries	☐
☑ Ability to invoke spousal privilege in a court of law	☐
☑ Access to reduced rate memberships at health clubs, social clubs, organizations	☐
☑ Prison visitation rights	☐

The debate over equal marriage rights for same-sex couples has exploded onto the national stage, quickly becoming the most divisive social issue in American politics today. Political and religious right wing extremists have launched a campaign to amend the U.S. Constitution in an effort to forever deny same-sex couples the right to have their relationships legally recognized. Rev. Jerry Falwell claimed in 2004 that the coordinated efforts of far right extremist groups had resulted in one million signatures on petitions in support of the Federal Marriage Amendment. This is about more than marriage; it is about using our lives and our relationships as a wedge issue to divide America. These extremists seek not only to uphold discrimination in marriage rights, but also to restrict or eradicate domestic partnerships and civil unions. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community faces a bruising political struggle.

First and foremost, everyone in the community, no matter where he or she is on marriage – for, against, don't know or don't care – must unite to fight the backlash. Second, because we cannot win this by ourselves, each of us must speak openly and directly to our families, friends, neighbors and co-workers. As the national atmosphere becomes poisoned with endless lies, defamations and distortions, each of us needs to say to those in our lives, "THEY ARE TALKING ABOUT ME AND I NEED YOU TO TAKE A STAND FOR ME."

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force

1325 Massachusetts Ave., NW • Suite 600 • Washington, DC 20005-4164 • (202) 393-5177 • FAX (202) 393-2241
www.TheTaskForce.org • TheTaskForce@TheTaskForce.org

NGL35876E27