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Gov. Gregoire announces historic legislation for marriage equality in Washington state

If approved, Washington to become 7th state in nation to legalize gay marriage

OLYMPIA –Standing before supporters of marriage equality, Gov. Chris Gregoire today announced she will introduce historic legislation that if passed, would allow same-sex marriages in Washington state.

“It’s time, it’s the right thing to do, and I will introduce a bill to do it,” Gregoire said. “I say that as a wife, a mother, a student of the law, and above all as a Washingtonian with a lifelong commitment to equality and freedom. Some say domestic partnerships are the same as marriage. That’s a version of the discriminatory ‘separate but equal’ argument.”

If legislation is approved, Washington would be the seventh state in the nation to legalize gay marriage, after Massachusetts, Connecticut, Iowa, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York.

“Our gay and lesbian families face the same hurdles as heterosexual families—making ends meet, choosing what school to send their kids to, finding someone to grow old with, standing in front of friends and family and making a lifetime commitment,” Gregoire said. “For all couples, a state marriage license is very important. It gives them the right to enter into a marriage contract in which their legal interests, and those of their children if any, are protected by well-established civil law.”

Gregoire’s announcement today follows years of advocating for equal rights for gays and lesbians. In 2006, she signed legislation banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing and other areas. In 2007, Substitute Senate Bill 5336 created the state domestic partnership registry. A year later, Gregoire signed House Bill 3104 which added additional rights and responsibilities relating to issues such as dissolutions, community property, estate planning, taxes, court process, conflicts of interest for public officials and guardianships. Legislation signed in 2009 requires state agencies to ensure that all privileges, immunities, rights, benefits, or responsibilities granted to married individuals are granted to an individual who is or was in a state registered domestic partnership.

“Throughout our history, we have fought discrimination,” Gregoire said. “We have joined together to recognize equality for racial minorities, women, people with disabilities, immigrants. Please join today to support equality again in our great state. It is the right thing to do and it is time.”

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