

07.31.08 - Discriminatory 1913 Statute Repealed

Governor Deval L. Patrick
1913 Statute Repeal and MassHealth Signing
July 31, 2008
As Delivered

On July 31, 2008, Governor Patrick signed a bill repealing a 95-year-old statute that prevented out-of-state same-sex couples from marrying in Massachusetts, as well as a MassHealth equality bill which grants married same-sex couples in Massachusetts equal access to Medicaid benefits.

Governor Patrick

[Before video begins] Thank you everyone. I am so proud and so pleased to be standing with my colleagues and government here, with the leadership of the Speaker and the Senate President, who today is represented by the extraordinary Senator Dianne Wilkerson... [Applause]

[video begins] ...to be with you all to sign two bills that confirm a simple truth and that is that in Massachusetts, equal means equal!

Today, by repealing a nearly century old law, we affirm the right of same sex couples from out-of-state to marry in Massachusetts, to enjoy all the protections of our good laws.

Today, by repealing this law, we continue to lead the way as a national leader. And today, by repealing this law, we have affirmed the democratic principal that all people come before their government as equals.

We are also here to mark another milestone in our fight for equality, the passage of the MassHealth equality bill. [Applause] This legislation will grant married same-sex couples in Massachusetts the same access to Medicaid benefits as heterosexual couples. The bill will protect the spouses of gay and lesbian seniors from the potentially catastrophic costs of long-term care, including impoverishment and, in the worst cases, homelessness. The MassHealth equality bill is the first piece of legislation in the Commonwealth to codify the Goodridge decision extending legal marriage and its protections, benefits, and obligations to same-sex married couples in our state. And it's the first piece of legislation in the nation to reject discrimination in the Federal Defense of Marriage Act. [Applause]

Marriage equality, and, let us face it, is still troubling for some of our fellow citizens here in the Commonwealth. But it is the law, and we must be about affirming that simple and basic premise that people come before their government as law. In five years now since the Goodridge decision the sky has not fallen, and the earth has not opened to swallow us up, and, more to the point, thousands and thousands of good people, contributing members of our society, are able to make free decisions about their personal choices. And we ought to seek to affirm that every chance we can. [Applause]

I want to acknowledge and ask you to applaud today and every day you can for the courage shown by our Legislature - the representatives and senators who are here today, and those whom they represent, for that vote and the leadership shown by my friend and yours, the speaker of the House, Sal DiMasi.

Speaker Salvatore DiMasi

Thank you very much Governor. Thank you very much for that warm reception, and I am so proud to stand next to the Governor, the leaders in the House and Senate, and all of the members of the Legislature to celebrate the signing of two more important laws to protect basic civil and human rights. Think about Massachusetts; think about where we have come from in Massachusetts over the years. This has been an incredible time for civil rights in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and I am proud to be a part of that, along with all of you. Let's have a round of applause for all of you. [Applause]

You know, the Supreme Judicial Court got it right in *Goodridge* - the decision that affirmed a founding principal here in Massachusetts that I always believed in and I know many of my colleagues always believe in-that every citizen of Massachusetts shall be treated equally and shall not be discriminated against. [*Applause.*] And I couldn't be more proud and it couldn't be a more important issue to me, during my tenure here as speaker, to stand with my fellow legislators in the Constitutional Convention and say no to putting discrimination into our constitution!

Senator Diane Wilkinson

Good Afternoon! [Applause] I'm tempted to let you go on, [Laughter] but you know this is our last day of formal session for the year and we have a lot more work to do. Representative Linsky reminded me that a lot of good things have happened in this very space-in this State House-in the past three or four years and I am thinking: What a difference a Governor makes! [Applause]

I suspect that many of the public thinks a lot of crazy things happen in this building-and they may be right! [Laughter] But what we also know is that a lot of wonderful, right things happen in this building and today we celebrate one of those.