

# Couples Seek To Help Defend Lawsuit Challenging Wisconsin's Domestic Partner Law

ACLU Urges Court To Allow Registered Domestic Partners To Speak  
In Support Of The Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2010

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MADISON, WI – The American Civil Liberties Union filed a motion before a Dane County circuit court today on behalf of five couples asking that they be allowed to participate in a lawsuit seeking to overturn Wisconsin's law granting limited domestic partnership protections to same-sex couples, so that they may defend the law. The law is being challenged by an anti-gay organization that contends that the law grants same-sex couples the same status as marriage, which is barred by the Wisconsin Constitution.

"Same-sex couples who have registered as domestic partners have the most at stake in this lawsuit and deserve to be heard," said John Knight, staff attorney with the ACLU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Project. "Only those directly affected by the law know what it's like to worry about not being able to visit a partner in the hospital or to be left with nothing when a partner dies without a will."

Wisconsin's law allows for same-sex couples to register as domestic partners, granting them hospital visitation rights, the right to make certain decisions about medical care and rights to family and medical leave. Same-sex couples are still denied crucial protections provided only to married couples, such as the right to decide what happens to their partner's body at death, and are denied access to all federal benefits, such as Social Security and veterans' benefits.

Board members of Wisconsin Family Action had asked the Wisconsin Supreme Court to strike down the domestic partner law as inconsistent with the amendment to the state constitution that bans same-sex couples from marriage. The case, *Applying v. Doyle*, was dismissed by the court and re-filed in the circuit court, where both sides will be able to have a trial and present evidence to support their cases.

"While the domestic partnership law in no way provides the same benefits and legal protections as marriage, it is a lifeline for committed couples who seek the security and dignity of being able to provide for their families," said Larry Dupuis of the ACLU of Wisconsin. "These couples have the right to defend these limited, but extremely important, protections against this unwarranted and mean-spirited attack."

Lambda Legal also filed court papers today to intervene in the case on behalf of Fair Wisconsin and five member couples, saying that domestic partnerships and marriages are not "substantially similar."

Attorneys on the case include Knight of the ACLU, Dupuis of the ACLU of Wisconsin and David J.B. Froiland, Linda E.B. Hansen, Daniel A. Manna and David B. Goroff of Foley & Lardner LLP.

Additional information about the case, including bios of the couples and legal documents, is available at: [www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/appling-v-doyle-case-profile](http://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/appling-v-doyle-case-profile)