



ACLU Opposes Discriminatory Lawsuit Challenging Wisconsin's Domestic Partner Law

**Friend-Of-The-Court Brief Supports Domestic Partnership Protections
For Same-Sex Couples**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 20, 2011

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MADISON, WI – The American Civil Liberties Union filed a friend-of-the-court brief today opposing a lawsuit seeking to overturn Wisconsin's law granting limited domestic partnership protections to same-sex couples. The ACLU's brief was filed on behalf of five couples who stand to lose crucial protections such as hospital visitation, the ability to make certain decisions about medical care and to access family medical leave if the law is overturned. The law is being challenged by an anti-LGBT organization that contends that the law grants same-sex couples a substantially similar status to marriage, which is barred by the Wisconsin Constitution. The same organization originally campaigned to secure the marriage amendment's passage, claiming at the time that domestic partnerships would not be affected.

Same-sex couples are still denied crucial protections provided only to married couples, such as the ability to decide what happens to their partner's body at death even without their partner's written authority, and are denied access to all federal benefits, such as Social Security and veterans' benefits. The ACLU's brief states that the plaintiffs unfairly equate limited domestic partnerships with marriage and that plaintiffs should be bound by the assurances they gave during the marriage amendment campaign that domestic partner benefits would be safe.

The following can be attributed to John Knight, staff attorney with the ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Project:

"Lesbian and gay couples who have registered as domestic partners are just as deeply committed to each other as any other couple that is allowed to marry in the state of Wisconsin. Having been denied the freedom to marry, these couples seek to hold on to the limited protections afforded to them, like being by their partner's bedside in the hospital or knowing that their partner will be cared for if something terrible happens to them. Stripping couples of these protections because of their sexual orientation is unfair and inhumane."

The following can be attributed to Larry Dupuis, Legal Director of the ACLU of Wisconsin:

"Domestic partnership protections don't provide the same security as marriage, but they do provide a lifeline for same-sex couples and their families in times of crisis. This lawsuit is nothing

more than a mean-spirited and uncalled for attack on families who just want to be able to provide for each other.”

The following can be attributed to Virginia Wolf, who is represented by the ACLU along with her partner, Carol Schumacher:

“Carol and I have been together for 35 years, have raised children and grandchildren together and are active in our church and community. We have known the pain and frustration of being barred from seeing each other in the hospital, and depend on our domestic partnership status to protect us from indignities and heartaches that married couples don’t have to face. It would be devastating to lose the basic assurance of knowing that if something happened to one of us, the other would be okay.”

Lawyers on the case include Knight of the ACLU LGBT Project, Dupuis of the ACLU of Wisconsin and Linda E.B. Hansen, Daniel A. Manna and David B. Goroff of Foley and 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