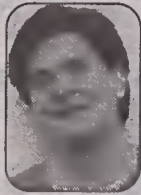


General Gayety

by Leslie Robinson
Contributing Writer



Marriage: Which state is next?

Iowa is the first state in the American heartland to legalize same-sex marriage. Vermont is the first state to allow same-sex marriage through legislative action rather than a court ruling.

I'm giddy, mostly due to these fabulous events and partly due to a pollen allergy. I cheer. I sneeze. It was a memorable early April.

Such a run of good marriage news makes me wonder where it will happen next. Which states will join Iowa, Vermont, Connecticut and Massachusetts in offering gay marriage? I have a few guesses on whether the struggle.

California: Oh, the pain gays and lesbians around the country felt when California voters passed Proposition 8. The events in Iowa and Vermont have gone a long way toward muting that pain. And how notable that hip California, considered the nation's trendsetter, has now fallen behind an itty-bitty New England state, as well as a state that still believes in Jell-O.

Legal experts tell us the California Supreme Court will probably let Prop 8 stand. So, it doesn't appear California will be the next state to grant same-sex marriage. Which means California's coolness level will plummet to the level of Mississippi.

New Hampshire: In March the House of Representatives approved a marriage bill; the Senate is expected to vote soon. Some think the fact that New Hampshire's neighbor voted for gay marriage will help persuade Granite Staters to do the same. As a former New Hampshireite, I think the opposite. The legislature will probably delay action on the marriage bill and instead pass a resolution criticizing Vermont for general smugness.

Maine: What I'm sure of is that if same-sex marriage passes here, there will be an immediate movement to undo it. This tendency to battle over and over and over on gay rights suggests that Mainers either like a good fight or are obsessive-compulsive.

Rhode Island: Three of the six New England states have granted gay marriage. Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri and his wife Sue hope to avoid the same result in Little Rhody. They've both just joined the state chapter of the National Organization for Marriage, a group fighting same-sex marriage around the country.

I suppose the governor could take an extreme step and have Rhode Island secede — but, I'm not sure the rest of the country would notice.

New York: There will be more dithering, posturing, confusion and drama, but gay marriage will happen in New York. And, when it does, New Yorkers will brag like they invented it.

New Jersey: This is certainly a state on a trajectory to do the right thing. In 2007, civil unions went into effect. About four months ago a state commission found that civil unions hadn't provided equal treatment and recommended the state legalize same-sex marriage.

New Jersey has been generally disparaged for so long and I'm tempted to say something will go wrong just because New Jersey is New Jersey. But, no. I believe the Garden State will come through. And those wishing to marry can heed New Jersey's mildly paranoid state slogan, "Come See For Yourself."

Michigan: Nobody's working. They have lots of time to fight for same-sex marriage.

Washington: In 2007 Washington established domestic partnerships. In 2008 legislation expanded the rights and responsibilities of domestic partnerships. Now in 2009 the state Senate has passed the so-called "everything but marriage" bill, which adds all the other state-level benefits of marriage to domestic partnerships. The House will likely pass it and the governor will sign it.

But, it's no secret in the Evergreen State that politicians have pursued this route so LGBT families will be protected until marriage is acquired. When will that happen? I can say definitively it will happen in Washington before Sasquatch teaches a forestry class. ▀

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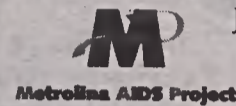
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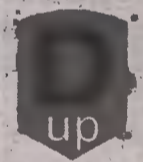
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