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Showdown in Mass. Over Non-Resident Marriages

By Ann Rostow
The Texas Triangle

On Friday, June 18, the Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) teamed up with the American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts to send a one-two punch into the teeth of the Romney administration. Governor Mitt Romney, (who took time out from running the Bay State to testify in favor of the Federal Marriage Amendment before the Senate Judiciary Committee), has ordered the state bureaucracy to limit same-sex marriages to Massachusetts residents. His action is based on his own personal interpretation of a 1913 statute that as far as anyone knows, has never been enforced in its entire history. And for reasons unclear, he is backed up in his view by Attorney General Tom Reilly, a Democrat who has in the past manifested at least some signs of sanity. Not as far as this matter is concerned, however.

News
with a
View

GLAD, the lawyers who litigated both the Vermont and the Massachusetts marriage cases, have said from the start that they will not allow the 1913 law to be enforced against gay couples without a fight. Since same-sex marriages began on May 17, a handful of towns issued marriage licenses to out of state couples in defiance of Romney's orders. But the towns pulled back after threats from the Attorney General's office, while Governor Romney took steps to see that the non-resident marriages would not be processed. The law in question, as many of you know, says that a marriage is void if it would be void in the home state of the couple in question. Designed to inhibit interracial marriages nearly a century ago, it was rediscovered in the margins of the Massachusetts codebooks just in time to be rehabilitated for an assault on gay civil rights.

Two separate lawsuits have now been filed against the state, and both of them could perhaps be considered the most critical marriage lawsuits in the country. In one, GLAD is representing eight same-sex couples, all residing outside of Massachusetts. Five of those couples were able to be married before the towns were forced to start imposing a residency requirement. The other three couples tried to get married, but were turned away. GLAD argues that Romney's "extreme and over-

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Pride Celebrates Marriage Rights

NEW YORK (AP) — Gay pride parade-goers danced down Fifth Avenue and waved rainbow flags Sunday in celebration of a movement that has made huge strides this year with the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts.

"Even 10 years ago I would have said that's the wrong issue," said Ed Glorius, arms entwined around his partner, Dwight Pollard, whom he married in an unofficial ceremony at a Manhattan restaurant last week. "And now I feel very differently."

While Massachusetts became the only U.S. state to legally recognize gay marriages following a ruling by its Supreme Judicial Court last November, gay pride revelers said they expect New York and other states to follow.

"We will do it no matter what," said Ricardo Moran of Bridgehampton, on Long Island. "It will be happening."

Officially called the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride March, the parade commemorates the Stonewall uprising of 1969, when gay bar patrons resisted a police raid. The police did not give a crowd estimate, but organizers claimed nearly 300,000 participants.

There were marching bands, politicians including Mayor Michael Bloomberg and, as always, plenty of men wearing G-strings and towering heels.

Actor Harvey Fierstein, who recently completed a Broadway run



Some 300,000 people turned out for New York City's gay pride parade June 27. Wockner News Photo by Andres Duque.

in "Hairspray," drew cheers and cries of "We love you Harvey!"

But the stars of the parade were couples like Gus Archilla and Elmer Lokkins, who married in Canada last year after living together for 58 years. They waved from a convertible with a "Just Married" sign on the bumper.

With President Bush supporting a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage, the parade was a political rally as much as a celebration.

Several contingents handed out voter registration forms, and

Massachusetts Rep. Barney Frank led a large group of supporters of Sen. John Kerry, the presumed Democratic presidential nominee. Frank, the first openly gay member of Congress, said he wasn't surprised that his state had legalized same-sex unions.

"I thought some day, but it happened earlier than I thought and it's been received better," he said.

Jim Williams of Baltimore said he was glad to see politicians marching.

"It shows how important the gay vote is," he said. "In a close election we can really make a difference."

For the fourth year running, the parade was preceded by a mass symbolic wedding in Central Park.

J.M. Sorrell, a justice of the peace in Massachusetts, told the 60 couples gathered to exchange vows how she cried when she officiated at the first legal same-sex wedding in Northampton, Mass.

"Everything has changed," she said. "It goes beyond the institution of marriage."

Evan Wolfson, executive director of the national advocacy group Freedom to Marry, said, "Let us celebrate today and then go to work. New York should lead, not lag."



Pretty Boys Galore at New York Price June 27

On the Net: Heritage of Pride:and nycpride.org

North Carolina Pride 2004: www.ncpride.org