



Relationship Recognition & Responsibilities Act

Introduction

While Arizonans are divided on the issue of marriage, an overwhelming majority recognize that unmarried couples in committed relationships should be able to take care of each other, regardless of their partner's gender. However, **Arizona law currently stands in the way of unmarried couples who want to make a lifelong commitment to support and love one another and be responsible for each other.** While some people are uncomfortable with the idea of recognizing the commitment of gay couples, almost **everyone agrees that we should not make it hard for committed couples to support each other.** The Relationship Recognition & Responsibilities Act helps unmarried couples take care of each other.

Relationship Recognition & Responsibilities

Relationship recognition laws **remove some of the barriers that prevent unmarried couples, gay or straight, from being able to take care of each other** and share responsibilities in their relationship. The Relationship Recognition and Responsibilities Act would give committed couples the ability to visit each other in the hospital, make decisions for each other in the case of a medical emergency, make funeral arrangements for each other, and inherit each other's assets and obligations.

Arizonans, Like Most Americans, Support Government Recognition of Relationships

- Arizonans want to help. 64% of Arizonans support removing barriers for gay couples in committed relationships by recognizing domestic partnerships.¹
- Government is responding. 13 states and the District of Columbia recognize the relationships of gay couples.²
- The State of Arizona, and the Cities of Tucson, Phoenix, Tempe and Scottsdale, support unmarried employees in committed relationships by offering domestic partner benefits.³
- Seventy-five cities, towns and counties nationwide, including the Cities of Tucson and Phoenix, maintain domestic partner registries.⁴
- Corporate America has taken the lead. 93% of businesses rated in the Human Rights Campaign's 2009 Corporate Equality Index support unmarried couples by offering domestic partner benefits.⁵

Unmarried Couples Lack Legal Protections Needed to Take Care of Each Other

- It's hard to imagine what it would be like to be told that you couldn't visit your husband in the hospital or hold your wife's hand and tell her that you love her before she went into surgery. It's wrong to hurt committed couples this way. **Nobody wants to stand in the way of committed couples being able to take care of each other,** but the lack of legal recognition for unmarried couples does just that.
- Many people do not realize that marriage gives couples a set of legal protections that let's them take care of each other—things like **hospital visitation, burial and inheritance rights, and the ability to make emergency medical decisions for each other.** Without a relationship recognition law, unmarried couples in committed relationships lack these protections.



Relationship Recognition Strengthens the Economy, Boosts the State Budget

Study after study demonstrates that enacting laws that recognize the relationships of gay couples and other unmarried couples in committed relationships has a positive economic impact. According to the Williams Institute at UCLA, enacting relationship recognition laws will lead to a boost to the state budget, largely as a result of savings in expenditures on state means-tested public benefits programs and an increase in state income tax revenue.⁶

Action Steps

While not everyone agrees on the issue of marriage, that doesn't mean Arizonans want to make it hard for gay couples to care for each other. Who would want to prevent committed couples from being able to support their family? Enacting a Relationship Recognition law will help unmarried couples take care of each other.

1 Wright Consulting, Inc. (June 2008). Poll of 603 likely Arizona voters.

2 National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (2008). Issue Maps.

3 Equality Arizona (2008). www.equalityarizona.org.

4 Human Rights Campaign (2008). www.hrc.org.

5 Human Rights Campaign (2008). Corporate Equality Index.

6 Williams Institute. UCLA. (2008). www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute