

# South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

## Range of South Florida voices, pro & con, on same-sex marriage rulings

By Anthony Man

Sun Sentinel

6:47 PM EDT, June 26, 2013

The U.S. Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage drew cheers from South Florida gay and lesbian couples, scorn from conservative Christians, and underscored fault lines on the issue within the Republican Party.

advertisement

Here are reports from throughout the day from South Floridians with a range of expertise and variety of views:

### **6:45 p.m. | Rally draws 200 plus**

More than 200 people attended a rush hour rally in support of same-sex marriage at the Federal Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale.

Organized by gay activist Michael Rajner, the event drew a range of people from the gay and lesbian community, as well as a slew of gay rights and political activists and several politicians.

The openly gay elected officials included Fort Lauderdale Commissioner Dean Trantalis, who called June 2013 the “best gay pride month in history.” He also noted the absence of the city’s heterosexual mayor, Jack Seiler, from the event. “Where’s our mayor?” he asked.

Also at the event were openly gay Wilton Manors commissioners Julie Carson and Tom Green.

State Sen. Chris Smith, of Fort Lauderdale, the Democratic leader in the Florida Senate, who is a black heterosexual, noted that the Supreme Court legalized interracial marriage in 1967. As for same-sex marriage, he posed this question to the justices: “What took you so damn long?”

Smith pronounced it a “great day for human rights.”

The crowd was orderly, but courthouse security guards were zealous at keeping people off federal property, including telling lawyer Robin Bodiford, who has a broken leg, that she couldn’t sit.

And Fort Lauderdale Police dispatched officers on horseback to patrol the rally.

### **3:46 p.m. | Conservative pastor fumes at Supreme Court**

“What in the world is going on with the U.S. Supreme Court. They have lost their ever-loving mind,” said the Rev. O’Neal Dozier, pastor of the Worldwide Christian Center in Pompano Beach. He’s trained as a lawyer, though he hasn’t taken the bar exam, and is a Republican Party activist.

“I really am dumbfounded. The problem is this: we have moved to another level now,” Dozier said.

“It is a sad day for conservatives in this country, for Bible-based believing people, whether they’re Jewish, Christians, Protestant, Catholic or whatever, it is a sad day for us because marriage has always been, ever since the beginning of time from the Garden of Eden, been between one man and one woman....

“How can you have a marriage between two people of the same sex? That can’t even happen because God ordained marriage between a man and a woman. If it’s not between a man and a woman then there is no marriage. Here we find the U.S. Supreme Court to take it upon themselves to redefine marriage. In other words what the U.S. Supreme Court has done is that they have called God a liar.... They say, ‘God, you had it wrong.’ They have taken it upon themselves to correct God. They question is do they believe, those five people that voted for this on the Supreme Court, do they believe they are greater than God?”

Dozier said he doesn’t want to see the Republican Party heed calls by some in the party to support same-sex marriage. “I don’t want the Republican Party to believe that they need to now endorse same-sex marriage in order to compete with the Democrats or compete with liberals for votes,” he said. “It will be destructive to the Republican Party.”

### **3:39 p.m. | Gay couples rejoice**

“I’m very pleased with the ruling,” said H. Joan Waitkevicz of West Palm Beach. “It’s a joy to see that our rights as citizens are expanding, and we would like to see it happen in Florida as well.”

Waitkevicz, 67, has been with her partner, Shirley Y. Herman, 71, for 40 years. The retirees married in Massachusetts in 2010.

Waitkevicz said she doesn’t expect a political reaction that energizes people opposed to same-sex marriage, because “the reactionaries are about as bad as they can be already.”

Herman said the court should have gone even farther. “We got married in Boston. We live in Florida. And Florida doesn’t recognize gay marriage. And so we would not have those rights. I think that is outrageous.

“I’m angry. But I think that’s what’s going to be worked out,” she said. “I think it’s outrageous that some people have rights and others don’t because their states are backward.”

Herman said the couple wouldn’t leave Florida, even though they’d enjoy some benefits in New York or Massachusetts that they wouldn’t in Florida.

“Life is comfortable here in Florida, and it’s hard to move when you’re old,” she said, adding the couple has many friends in Palm Beach County.

She said it would be a mistake to leave “rather than duke it out. Because I think it will change here. Leaving won’t change things, where as staying and talking to people will.”

Herman isn’t concerned about people on the other side of the battle. “They sound shriller and shriller, the bigots,” she said.

Nate Klarfeld of Fort Lauderdale has mixed feelings.

“The Supreme Court decision fell short,” he said because same-sex marriage is not legal in Florida.

“If anything this was a huge call to action. We’ve got a lot of work to do. Marriage equality is just one part of the puzzle for full rights,” he said.

“I take all of this really personally right now,” he said, explaining that he and his partner (described below in update from Wednesday morning) have three grandchildren.

“I want them to grow up and look at our relationship the same way they look at their other grandparents. But we have an asterisk by our name. I want marriage. I want those kids to grow up in a world and look at our their family and know that we are looked at in the eyes of the law and society as equal.”

Patty Harris of Oakland Park (profiled below with Klarfeld) said she is elated.

“I feel elated that the Supreme Court has made a fair and just ruling, that they’re getting this one right, the righting of wrongs. They’re setting the law straight,” she said. “I feel elated for the moment. However I feel as if the journey isn’t over, the fight isn’t over, the struggle isn’t over.”

“While we made tremendous progress on the federal level, we still have a lot of work to do on the state level. There are 37 states that haven’t joined equal marriage and that fight needs to continue and that debate needs to continue,” she said.

Stephen Muffler, 46, a Fort Lauderdale lawyer, said Wednesday was a good day.

“Me and my husband are equal now, at least on the federal level, and we’re overjoyed by that,” he said.

Still, he said, “it’s going to be another journey.” Federal agencies have many rules in determining many benefits, and state laws in Florida aren’t affected.

“It’s not clear that this decision is going to vest me and my husband with as many rights as everybody else has,” he said. “Over time, it’ll happen.”

He and Lisandro Depaula have been together nine years. In March 2012, they were married in New York City. Muffler took Depaula’s name, which is reflected in the marriage paperwork, but that’s not recognized by Florida. He said that’s the kind of issue that will now be litigated.

“Now we have momentum. [The Supreme Court opinion in the DOMA case] “is something that people are going to be able to use and cite now. It is very inspiring now to see five Supreme Court justices use the equal protection argument saying you can’t discriminate based on sexual preference in marriage.

“It’s really a victory for America. The bottom line is we’re achieving what we want and that’s equality for America. And there’s still many more pages to turn and chapters to be written in this book.”

### **3:32 p.m. | Statement from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach:**

*“We are still reviewing the U.S. Supreme Court’s rulings on the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and Proposition 8. Although the Supreme Court rulings are not what we had hoped for, it does not sway our belief that we as Catholics believe marriage is meant to be a lifelong partnership of mutual and exclusive fidelity between a man and a woman. This union is meant to be open to children who are nurtured by a mother and father who bring unique gifts in the raising of their children and to society.*”

*Despite the Supreme Court's decision, we will continue to promote the beauty and goodness of the institution of marriage and its foundational importance to our culture, especially its importance to children. That is a foundation of our faith and our God-given religious freedom. We encourage the faithful to stand firm in their belief and to pray for marriage and family life," said Dianne Laubert, director of communications, Diocese of Palm Beach.*

## **2:42 p.m. | Reaction from Wilton Manors**

There's keen interest in the ruling in Wilton Manors.

Only one city in America, Provincetown, Mass., has a higher concentration of same-sex households than Wilton Manors, the unofficial gay capital of South Florida, according to an analysis of Census Bureau Data by the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law.

Wilton Manors, where a majority of the City Commission is gay or lesbian, has 140 same-sex couples per 1,000 households; Oakland Park has 56 per 1,000, putting it at No. 10 on the national list. Overall, Florida has 8.8 same-sex couples for every 1,000 households.

A majority of the city commission there is openly gay or lesbian.

Here's what Mayor Gary Resnick, who rode Saturday in the city's gay pride parade with his partner, Eric Bucher, at his side, said via email about the Supreme Court rulings:

*"The Supreme Court's ruling today is one of those rare instances in history that changes our lives. I am thrilled that the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act as unconstitutional. As Justice Kennedy wrote, "the avowed purpose and practical effect of [DOMA] are to impose a disadvantage, a separate status, and so a stigma upon all who enter into same-sex marriages made lawful by the unquestioned authority of the States."*

*"As Wilton Manors has one of the largest gay and lesbian populations per capita in the nation, this decision will have significant consequences for thousands of our residents in Wilton Manors and our region and millions of people around the country – now and in the future. And this has tremendous personal meaning for me and my partner, Eric, as a gay couple who have been together for over 12 years."*

*"Finally gays and lesbians who chose to get married will be entitled to the same benefits and rights as straight married couples. This is huge and we will remember where we were when we learned of this landmark decision."*

## **2:13 p.m. | Politicians react**

South Florida politicians have reacted mostly, but not entirely, along expected party lines.

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., criticized the Supreme Court for "a serious mistake today when it overstepped its important, but limited role."

Other Republicans supported the court decision, including the Broward Young Republicans and Coral Springs City Commissioner Dan Daley. "History was made today. I applaud the US Supreme Court in their decision to strike down DOMA and Prop 8. Equal rights for all, means all. Equality is not a partisan issue and hopefully the FL Legislature got that message loud and clear," Daley said in an email.

U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Miami, tweeted, "#SCOTUS strikes down #DOMA 2day! We must continue to fight for our Constitutional rights + equality 4 all!"

South Florida's Democratic U.S. Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Lois Frankel, Ted Deutch, and Frederica Wilson all supported the court's actions.

"DOMA is unconstitutional, and we take an enormous step forward in the march to #MarriageEquality," Deutch said via Twitter.

To see their full statements, most of which are quite long, scroll all the way to the end of this report.

### **1:45 p.m. | Voters may be asked to repeal Florida ban on same-sex marriage**

Activists aren't sure about their course of action in Florida, where voters added a ban on gay marriage to the state Constitution in 2008. It received 62 percent of the vote statewide; 52 percent in Broward and Palm Beach counties.

The big state gay rights group Equality Florida recently launched a "Get Engaged" campaign, a long-term effort to secure same-sex marriage rights in Florida.

But Nadine Smith, Equality Florida's executive director, said she wasn't sure if it would push for a change in the state Constitution in the November 2014 ballot. "We're not committed to the 2014 ballot. But every option remains on the table," she said before the court acted.

A Miami-based group calling itself Equal Marriage Florida is gearing up a campaign to get a question before voters in the 2014 governor's election.

Changing the Florida Constitution requires 60 percent of the vote, and it's unclear if there's sufficient support to change the ban on gay marriage that voters added in 2008.

Of 500 Floridians surveyed in March by Public Policy Polling, 38 percent said gay couples should be allowed to legally marry, 37 percent said gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry, and 23 percent said there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship.

Other polls that ask about same-sex marriage and don't offer a civil union option show higher support for gay marriage, but still short of 60 percent.

Moreover, in midterm elections between presidential contests, turnout slips – especially among Democrats. And Democrats are much bigger supporters of same-sex marriage than Republicans, whose turnout doesn't slip as much.

### **1:39 p.m. | Palm Beach County lawyer, gay rights advocate reacts**

Rand Hoch, founder and president of the gay rights group Palm Beach County Human Rights Council, said the decision striking down the Defense of Marriage Act is "pretty amazing, because it's so broad."

"The DOMA decision is brilliant," he said.

Still, he said it leaves many unanswered questions, and doesn't do anything to aid gay couples in Florida.

For example: "Two people who were married in New York or Massachusetts but moved to Florida, are they going to have to move back to New York or Massachusetts to get the full benefits?"

"People who just flew up to D.C. or flew out to California or Massachusetts or any other state, and they came back to Florida, even with the Supreme Court decision, they're still roommates," he said.

Though some activists are talking about efforts to ask voters to remove the ban on same-sex marriage from the Florida Constitution, Hoch is pessimistic about that happening. “The odds of Amendment 2 [the 2008 same-sex marriage ban] being repealed are extremely, extremely, extremely remote.”

“It’s very difficult to amend the Constitution,” he said. “You’re asking 60 percent of the Florida voters to decide to get rid of part of our Constitution... I’m not optimistic that we’re going to be able to change it here in Florida. I think it’s going to be dependent on the United States Supreme Court.”

That means, Hoch said, it’s likely to be a long time before same-sex marriage becomes a reality in Florida. “It will be a while,” he said.

He said the Supreme Court might someday rule in this kind of case: The surviving widow or widower of a same-sex couple married in another state but living in Florida applies for Social Security or veterans benefits based on the deceased spouse.

For now, he said, “There are so many unanswered questions about how all these things are going to fall into place. But the good thing is we have the ability to ask these things.”

“I think it’s a positive day for everybody in America. Because what it comes down to is families. And people who decide to create a family and people who have the ability to do so legally in one state is now recognized by the federal government.”

Hoch, 58, started his gay rights activism in Florida in 1979. In 1992, then-Gov. Lawton Chiles appointed him a judge of compensation claims, making him the first openly gay judge in Florida. He served a single term ending in 1996.

“It’s amazing because the issue of gay marriage wasn’t even on my radar...”

### **1:29 p.m. | Legal advocate assess impact**

Elizabeth F. Schwartz of Miami is president of the Miami Beach Bar Association and chairwoman of the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Association of Miami.

“This was a great day. These are two wonderful decisions that advance very important rights for same-sex couples. The Proposition 8 case will bring marriage back to California where it belongs. And the striking back of the core of DOMA, of section three of DOMA, will ensure that couples that are married in other states are granted federal benefits.

“I’m sorry to say that it means that we still have quite a bit to fight for here in the state of Florida. Because the DOMA decision does not affect the statewide marriage ban in states like Florida that has that. It means that we will have to redouble our efforts to bring marriage our efforts to bring marriage equality.

“This victory is a step in the right direction. That’s for sure. However, we still have a ban against marriage equality in the state of Florida. And this court decision doesn’t change that. It gives us great language to use in our legislation and litigation efforts to see marriage equality in the state of Florida. So it’s a tremendous step in the right direction. It’s a quantum leap in the right direction. We still have a lot of work to do. Couples from Florida should not run and get married and think that they will see any benefits from those marriages in the state of Florida.”

Many benefits are applied based on whether a marriage is valid where a couple lives, not based on the validity in the state where the couple married, Schwartz said.

“Those marriages are not anymore valid today than they were yesterday because those couples that went to new York to get married and then came back home to Florida or moved to Florida are not going to be afforded, at least as where we know now, are not going to be afforded the great majority of benefits that come with marriage.... If you live in Florida your marriage is not recognized as valid. There is still going to be some work to do, and it’s not entirely clear if we will be able to fix some of these inconsistencies.”

Still, she said, it was a big plus for same-sex marriage. “It’s a great day for equality and certainly the beginning of the end of official discrimination against lesbians and gay men, but we certainly have quite a ways to go to bring this victory to all states.”

Schwartz has spent her career working on legal issues involving gay and lesbian families. She’s been with her partner for 11 years, but hasn’t gotten married and advises same-sex Florida couples against getting married in other states.

“I advise against people getting married while there’s no benefit associated with it, and where there’s only potential pitfalls,” she said. For example, if a same-sex couple is married in another state and splits up, they can’t get divorced in Florida.

### **12:45 p.m. | Conservative pastor unhappy**

Pastor Mark Boykin of Church of All Nations in Boca Raton said he’s distressed by the Supreme Court’s actions. Boykin’s church crawls most of it’s parishioners from southern Palm Beach County and northern Broward.

“I’m not very sanguine,” he said.

“Probably the thing that’s most problematic is how the Supreme Court usurped the will of the people,” which he said was shown when the Congress passed and President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act into law and the voters of California passed Proposition 8, ending gay marriage in that state.

The Supreme Court, “with one fell swoop wiped that away. To me, that boggles the mind,” he said. “I think it’s a dangerous thing.”

He objects to the way the other side, people who support same-sex marriage, characterizes his side.

“Hearing the language that the other side has used and they keep saying we’re discriminating and we’re bigots and we hate. Yet all of the language emanating from those people is very bellicose. ‘We’re fighting this fight.’ The most sensible approach for us is to believe in the system to stand for our rights and speak out because we do have rights.

“In Florida, if they want to fight, they’ll get a fight. But I’d rather not use that kind of bellicose language.

“We’re going to defend our rights. I think it’s going to galvanize conservatives because of what they’ve seen today,” Boykin said.

His overall reaction: “I was shocked. I’m truly shocked,” Boykin said.

“Those of us who believe in traditional marriage, we have a job to do, and that job is to stand firm and to be unwavering though all the celebration that we’re watching. Because traditional values have survived 6,000 years,” he said. “We owe it to our families, we owe it to our community and our nation at large to stand for traditional family values, and that means traditional marriage.”

### **10:47 a.m. | Enthusiastic response to rulings**

At the Java Boys coffee shop in Wilton Manors, unofficial capital of South Florida's gay and lesbian community, customers watching television coverage of the Supreme Court rulings were generally pleased – though they'd hoped for more.

"It's a major stepping stone," said Albie Brice of Fort Lauderdale, a clerk at a retail store, whose eyes were glued to the TV from the moment the news coverage began.

He said he isn't too surprised that the rulings advanced the cause of gays and lesbians. "I've watched civil rights legislation. I've watched legislation for rights of women. As far as I'm concerned, it's another day in the life of America."

He'd like to see same-sex marriage legal in Florida. "We just have to keep pushing. It's a matter of time," he said.

Howard Woodkirk of Wilton Manors, retired at 55, married his long-time partner in Canada in 2005. His husband died in 2008.

"Freedom and liberties, that's why we're here. The United States is supposed to be free, free to live the way we want," Woodkirk said. "It should be a non-issue as far as I'm concerned."

He said he and his husband spent thousands of dollars to create documents that protected them since their marriage wasn't legal. And he was fortunate, in a sense, because his husband was employed by the city of Flint, Mich., which has domestic partner benefits. That means he was able to receive his late husband's pension.

Kyle Baker, 25, a student from Plantation, said he's about to text his partner of two years, who's at work in a meeting, and likely hadn't heard the news.

"It's inspiring. It gives hope that in the next couple of years it'll all change," he said.

He popped into Java Boys for a quick coffee, and didn't expect he'd be sitting there for half an hour glued to the TV. "I usually don't follow politics. It's my partner who does. This could affect us."

"We would definitely love to be able to get married," he said.

Within the next two years, the couple plans to move to California, where his partner is from. And they'll get married there. They've been together for two years.

He's glad that the cause of same-sex marriage was advanced by the nation's high court, but disappointed that the court didn't go farther and legalize it everywhere.

### **10:10 a.m. | South Florida rallies planned**

Gay rights activists are planning rallies in all three South Florida counties in response to the Supreme Court's action.

**Broward:** 5:30 p.m. Outside the Federal Courthouse at the intersection of East Broward Boulevard and Third Avenue, Fort Lauderdale. Organized by activist Michael Rajner in connection with the Pride Center in Wilton Manors and the gay rights group Equality Florida.

**Palm Beach County:** 4 p.m. Plaza at the West Palm Beach City Hall and Library at the intersection of Clematis Street and Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach. Organized by the gay rights group Equality Florida.



Miami-Dade County: 6 p.m. Courtyard of the LGBT Visitors Center, 1130 Washington Ave., Miami Beach. Organized by the gay rights groups Equality Florida and SAVE Dade.

### **10:05 a.m. | Voters may be asked to repeal Florida ban on same-sex marriage**

Activists aren't sure about their course of action in Florida, where voters added a ban on gay marriage to the state Constitution in 2008. It received 62 percent of the vote statewide; 52 percent in Broward and Palm Beach counties.

The big state gay rights group Equality Florida recently launched a "Get Engaged" campaign, a long-term effort to secure same-sex marriage rights in Florida.

But Nadine Smith, Equality Florida's executive director, said she wasn't sure if it would push for a change in the state Constitution in the November 2014 ballot. "We're not committed to the 2014 ballot. But every option remains on the table," she said before the court acted.

A Miami-based group calling itself Equal Marriage Florida is gearing up a campaign to get a question before voters in the 2014 governor's election.

Changing the Florida Constitution requires 60 percent of the vote, and it's unclear if there's sufficient support to change the ban on gay marriage that voters added in 2008.

Of 500 Floridians surveyed in March by Public Policy Polling, 38 percent said gay couples should be allowed to legally marry, 37 percent said gay couples should be allowed to form civil unions but not marry, and 23 percent said there should be no legal recognition of a gay couple's relationship.

Other polls that ask about same-sex marriage and don't offer a civil union option show higher support for gay marriage, but still short of 60 percent.

Moreover, in midterm elections between presidential contests, turnout slips – especially among Democrats. And Democrats are much bigger supporters of same-sex marriage than Republicans, whose turnout doesn't slip as much.

### **10 a.m. | Frankel at Supreme Court**

U.S. Rep. Lois Frankel, D-West Palm Beach, tweets picture of herself waiting outside the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Everyone should be able to live in a committed relationship with the one they love regardless of gender," she tweets.

### **9:58 a.m. | Gay couples waiting**

Gay and lesbian couples throughout South Florida have been waiting for news from the Supreme Court, hoping it would make same-sex marriage the law of the land.

"It would mean everything to us. It would mean that we have equal standing with all the other citizens of the United States who have been able to enjoy the privilege of marriage, and all the rights that come with it," said Patty Harris, 49, of Oakland Park.

Harris, who works in real estate, has been with her partner Carol Lambert, 69, for 28 years.

They're registered as domestic partners with Broward County. But that doesn't allow them to file joint

income tax returns or one to get Social Security benefits as a survivor if the other partner dies. "If something happens to me, I would like my partner, my love of my life, to get my benefits," Lambert said.

If she could marry Harris, Lambert said, "I would no longer be a second-class citizen. I would have all the rights and privileges that every other married couple has."

Would she get married? "Oh yes. Oh yes. No hesitation."

Fort Lauderdale couple Nate Klarfeld, 62, a retired dentist, and Grover Lawlis, 64, a retired psychiatrist, said they'll get married someday. Klarfeld said he is sure same-sex marriage eventually will become legal in Florida. "It's a 'when.'"

The couple has been together 10 years. After a year, they registered as domestic partners with Broward County. "I thought it was going to be this heart fluttering moment," Klarfeld said. Instead, it requires a visit to a clerk in the county government office building. "It is about as romantic as getting a fishing license."

Klarfeld said the domestic partnership cards helped them deal with hospitals when each medical emergencies. And they've invested in having legal documents drawn up to specify their wishes.

But marriage would mean something more, he said. "Being recognized by my community, which is the whole city, not just the gay community, that everyone recognizes our relationship as honorable as theirs," he said. "Once you have a mortgage together, you're married, that's what I keep saying. But the words make a difference."

## **2:10 p.m. | Politicians statements**

### **From U.S. Rep. Lois Frankel, D-West Palm Beach:**

*"Today's Supreme Court rulings mark a giant step forward for marriage equality. If we are truly a nation where the pursuit of happiness is for one and for all, then any person regardless of gender should be allowed to live in a committed relationship with the one they love. The Supreme Court rulings set us on this path, and there is more work to be done until there is equality in every state including Florida."*

### **From Broward County Young Republicans:**

*We applaud the Supreme Court decisions today regarding the status of marriage in United States.*

*By striking down the core of the Defense of Marriage Act, The Supreme Court made clear that states have a right to make decisions for themselves and the Federal Government must respect those decisions. By vacating and remanding California's Proposition 8 in the Ninth Circuit, it upheld the District Court opinion that discrimination cannot be enshrined into a state constitution.*

*Straight or gay, all lovers of restrained government won in today's SCOTUS decisions. We look forward to continued conversation on the relationship between We The People and our Government*

### **From U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Weston, chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee:**

*"Today is an historic day for marriage equality in America. The Supreme Court rulings released today brought our nation one step closer to realizing our Constitution's promise of equality for all Americans. In striking down Section 3 of the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act, the Court ensured that married gay and lesbian couples are fully recognized by their government and will have the opportunity to benefit from*

*the host of rights and benefits designed to strengthen and protect American families.*

*“From Social Security benefits to immigration rights, Americans who are legally married in a state that recognizes same-sex marriages will now be afforded the same federal recognition and federal benefits that any other married couple receives. In California, Proposition 8 which banned same-sex marriages is consigned to the trash-heap of history and California joins 12 other states and the District of Columbia in recognizing the freedom to marry whomever one loves.*

*“For married couples living in states that do not recognize their marriages, including Florida, there is still uncertainty. We must work to ensure that these couples receive the federal recognition and respect that they deserve. I am committed to working with my colleagues in Congress and the President to make that dream a reality.*

*“Today also puts to an end House Republicans continued waste of millions of taxpayer dollars in their effort to defend their unconstitutional Defense of Marriage Act. It is shameful that it took the highest court in the land to end their reprehensible fight to deny basic civil rights and justice to an entire group of Americans. Today’s ruling marked the seventh time that House Republicans were defeated in court, wasting \$2.3 million of Americans’ hard earned tax dollars in their quest to defend inequality. It is my sincere hope that Republicans will now join Democrats in our focus on creating jobs, boosting our economy, and strengthening our families.*

*“As a wife, I am proud that today is a joyous victory for countless American marriages. As a mother, I celebrate that today marks another step toward fairness and equality for all of our nation’s families. Freedom to marry for all Americans is within our nation’s grasp, and I look forward to working together to make it happen.”*

#### **From U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla.:**

*“I believe the Supreme Court made a serious mistake today when it overstepped its important, but limited role. I do not believe that President Clinton and overwhelming bipartisan majorities of both houses of Congress acted with malice or intent to ‘demean’ a class of people when they adopted a uniform definition of marriage for the purposes of federal law. The Court should not have second guessed the will of the American people acting through their elected representatives without firm constitutional justifications. The sweeping language of today’s majority opinion is more troubling than the ruling itself as it points to further interference by the Court in the years to come.*

*“I recognize that the definition of marriage and the legal status of same-sex relationships is a deeply personal and emotional issue for Americans of a variety of viewpoints. These types of disagreements should be settled through the democratic process, as the Founders intended, not through litigation and court pronouncements.*

*“For millions of Americans, the definition of marriage is not an abstract political question, or some remote legal debate. It’s a deeply personal issue. It’s an issue that I have grappled with as well.*

*“I believe that marriage is a unique historical institution best defined as the union between one man and one woman. In the U.S., marriage has traditionally been defined by state law, and I believe each state, acting through their elected representatives or the ballot, should decide their own definition of marriage. For the purposes of federal law, however, Congress had every right to adopt a uniform definition and I regret that the Supreme Court would interfere with that determination.*

*“I appreciate that many Americans’ attitude towards same-sex marriage have changed in recent years. I respect the rights of states to allow same-sex marriages, even though I disagree with them. But I also expect*

*that the decisions made by states like Florida to define marriage as between one man and one woman will also be respected.*

*“I do not believe there exists a federal constitutional right to same-sex marriage. Therefore, I am glad the Supreme Court did not create one in the Proposition 8 case.*

*“Rather than having courts redefine marriage for all Americans, my hope is that the American people, through their state legislatures and referendums, can continue to decide the definition of marriage. It is through debates like this that the brilliance of our constitutional system of democracy, and the inherent goodness of our people, is revealed.*

*“My hope is that those of us who believe in the sanctity and uniqueness of traditional marriage will continue to argue for its protection in a way that is respectful to the millions of American sons and daughters who are gay. It is also my hope that those who argue for the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex marriage will refrain from assailing the millions of Americans who disagree with them as bigots.”*

**From U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson, a Miami Democrat who represents part of South Broward:**

*“Today’s rulings represent a victory for liberty, equality, and family. These decisions bring our nation one step closer to realizing the promise inherent in our Constitution.*

*“As a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement, I feel a personal connection to today’s ruling. LGBT rights are civil rights.*

*“In California, thousands of same-sex couples and their children will now enjoy the recognition and legal protection they so richly deserve. In states throughout the nation, gay and lesbian couples will finally enjoy the federal rights and benefits to which they are entitled. This is a great day for our democracy.*

*“But, the fight for equality for LGBT Americans continues. A majority of states, including my home state of Florida, do not recognize the fundamental rights of same-sex couples. In solidarity with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans, I stand ready to continue the fight for fairness. It’s time for all states as well as the federal government to clearly and unequivocally guarantee the equal rights of every person under the law.”*

**From state Rep. Jared Moskowitz, D-Coral Springs:**

*“Today, five U.S. Supreme Court justices have told the American people what we’ve known all along: the Defense of Marriage Act that has defined marriage as solely between a man and a woman is unconstitutional because it is a deprivation of the equal liberty of persons who are protected by the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment.*

*“I wish the Supreme Court had gone even further to invalidate all bans on gay marriage, such as the one that exists in Florida. I call upon my colleagues in the Legislature to not wait for the next court ruling to make Florida a more equitable and just state.*

*“History will remember those who opposed the march for LGBT equality. I’m proud to say that I support equality for all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation.”*

**From U.S. Rep. Ted Deutch, D-Boca Raton:**

*“Today’s Supreme Court decision represents an enormous step forward in the advancement of equal rights*

*for all Americans. Like so many Americans around the country, I was so pleased to see that today's decision brings us ever closer to full marriage equality. From this day forward, the discrimination codified by the Defense of Marriage Act will no longer deny hundreds of federal rights and protections to same-sex couples legally married in the United States.*

*"As we applaud this historic victory for civil rights, we must also remember that the struggle for marriage equality continues. Thousands of couples across this country – including in Florida – remain denied the right to marry. We must continue our efforts to ensure that all Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, receive equal protection under the law."*

Copyright © 2013, [South Florida Sun-Sentinel](#)