



New Jersey Governor Signs Same-Sex Marriage Law

By GayWebMonkey.com

Newark, NJ - New Jersey Gov. Jon S. Corzine signed legislation Thursday granting same-sex couples all the benefits and responsibilities of state sanctioned marriage, but not the title.

According to the Associated Press, when the law goes into effect Feb. 19, New Jersey will become the third state offering civil unions to same-sex couples and the fifth allowing same-sex couples some version of marriage.

Connecticut and Vermont also offer civil unions for gay couples, while Massachusetts allows same-sex couples to marry, and California has domestic partnerships that bring full marriage rights under state law.

"We must recognize that many gay and lesbian couples in New Jersey are in committed relationships and deserve the same benefits and rights as every other family in this state," Corzine said in signing the legislation, reports the AP.

The Legislature passed the civil unions bill on Dec. 14 in response to a state Supreme Court order that same-sex couples be granted the same rights as married couples. The court in October gave lawmakers six months to act but left it to them to decide whether to call the unions "marriage" or something else.

State Sen. Loretta Weinberg, a champion of the bill, vowed that she would shepherd further legislation that would allow gay unions to be called marriage, reports *USA Today*.

"These rights for same-sex couples will be known as they should be under the banner of marriage," Weinberg said, reports *USA Today*.

Same-sex couples welcomed the new law, but argue not calling it "marriage" creates a different, inferior institution, reports the AP. Even some same-sex couples who attended the bill signing remained lukewarm about the law.

"It's a step forward, but it's not true equality," Veronica Hoff, 52, of Mount Laurel, told the AP as she stood with her partner.

Opponents of the law have said the institution of marriage is defined as between a man and a woman. But according to *USA Today*, no protesters or opponents made themselves apparent at the morning's signing.

Mary McManus of Howell told *USA Today* she planned to join with her partner of 10 years in a state-sanctioned civil union.

"Obviously it would be more beneficial for everyone if there were marriage," said McManus, who is raising three children with her partner, reports *USA Today*.

The civil unions law grants gay couples adoption, inheritance, hospital visitation and medical decision-making rights and the right not to testify against a partner in state court.

Written By Troy Espera