

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2011 9:10 PM
To: H
Subject: Fw: Fwd: Menendez marriage equality op ed

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----- Original Message -----

From: Winnie Stachelberg [mailto: [redacted] [redacted]]
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2011 08:28 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: Fwd: Menendez marriage equality op ed

I wanted you to see this. And also Secty Vilsack gave a somewhat tortured answer re marriage and the Iowa law and repeal fight the other day. I will send you the link when I can find it.

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Ann Garcia < [redacted] >
Date: December 19, 2011 10:20:43 AM EST
To: LGBT Core <LGBTCore [redacted]>
Cc: Immigration Core List <ImmigrationCoreList [redacted]>
Subject: Menendez marriage equality op ed

FYI

Discrimination against same-sex marriages cannot be tolerated in our society as a matter of law

By Robert Menendez

The Star Ledger – December 18, 2011

<http://blog.nj.com/njv_guest_blog/2011/12/discrimination_against_same-se.html>http://blog.nj.com/njv_guest_blog/2011/12/discrimination_against_same-se.html

Since my vote in favor of the Defense of Marriage Act 15 years ago, like tens of millions of Americans, I have reflected deeply and frequently about this issue. During this time, I have engaged in discussions about the issue of marriage equality with friends, family members, colleagues and of course, the people I serve in New Jersey. I have heard and listened to many different views.

But for me, this comes down to an issue of fundamental fairness. For me, this comes down to the principles I learned as the child of immigrants and that I cherish as an American: that we believe in equality for all people under the law.

So today, I am announcing my support for the Respect for Marriage Act, which repeals DOMA and ensures that all lawfully married couples — including same-sex couples — receive the benefits of marriage under federal law.

Across our country, the attitudes of millions of Americans have changed on this issue and several states have acted to guarantee the freedom to marry to same-sex couples whose love for each other and life commitment to one another is no different from other couples.

These gay men and gay women defend our streets and our citizens as firefighters and police officers; they are small-business people who create jobs; they are teachers who prepare our children to compete in the future. And they are soldiers, Marines and sailors who have put their lives on the line for our country, fighting to protect our freedoms and to combat terrorists who threaten to attack us again.

For many years, these millions of committed couples have argued that the freedom to marry — their freedom to marry — is a core civil rights issue. I now believe they are right.

In affirming marriage equality for individuals, it is important to remember that no church, no faith, no religion will be required — nor would I support requiring them — to perform marriages that are not consistent with the tenets of their religion.

In other states, the things that many of us take for granted — getting married, having a family, visiting a spouse in the hospital, making life and death decisions for a spouse in end-of-life situations, collecting spousal benefits to continue providing for our family — are still being denied to same-sex couples. Can you imagine not only dealing with a dying loved one and the inevitable fights with your insurance company, but also having to fight just to get into the hospital room to see the person you've loved and with whom you've spent your life? That's fundamentally unfair, and I don't want to be a part of continuing that discrimination.

I believe the time has come to recognize the civil rights of the LGBT community. Fundamentally, I do not view this as an issue of special rights, but simply one of equal rights. No American should have to wait outside a hospital room while a loved one suffers inside. No American should lose inheritance simply because the federal government does not recognize the couple's marriage. No child should feel that his or her parents are somehow less equal under the law than a best friend's parents.

This kind of discrimination cannot be tolerated in our society as a matter of law, and it should not be tolerated. Two people who want to be committed to each other should be able to enter into marriage, and they should receive the benefits that flow from that commitment.

Sen. Robert Menendez is a New Jersey Democrat.