

# NEWS RELEASE

**For Release**

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**Contact:**

Anne Fenton (917)251-4691

[Anne4448@gmail.com](mailto:Anne4448@gmail.com)

## *It's About Equality*

I share the disappointment of many of my fellow New Yorkers in the unfortunate vote taken in the New York State Senate to reject marriage equality. Like many leaders from all walks of life, from the labor movement, from the faith community, from the world of business, I have worked hard to advance the cause of marriage equality. When I voted for equal marriage rights in the Assembly I saw it as a stand for civil rights. I saw it as a stand for equal rights. This bill would have erased the last barrier to full legal equality for thousands of our fellow New Yorkers—including people who serve in the military and may soon be fighting in Afghanistan, people who protect us as members of local police forces or as firefighters or e.m.t.'s, and some of the people who rushed into the World Trade Center buildings on 9/11 risking their own lives to rescue the injured. How can I, or any elected official, deny them the fundamental civil right to be able to marry someone they love, someone with whom they may have had a loving relationship for decades?

Please note that my position says nothing about religion. Marriage is a civil right. Marriage is a right sanctioned by the state of New York. Nobody is saying that a church or a synagogue or a mosque has to marry same sex couples. This is strictly a civil matter, strictly a matter of being legally married and having all the rights and responsibilities that go along with that. Legalizing gay marriage does no harm to anyone else; it takes nothing away from anyone else. Failing to legalize same sex marriage does great harm to many loving couples, denies essential rights to many worthy citizens of New York, and denigrates the loving families of same sex couples.

More and more New Yorkers are coming to see this issue as I do—as an issue of civil rights, an issue of fairness and equality. The Marist poll released yesterday, shows a majority of New Yorkers are in favor of same sex marriage. The overwhelming majority of the New York State Assembly voted as I did on this bill. I believe that the day is not far off when most New Yorkers, gay and straight, young and old, Black, White, Hispanic, and Asian, will look back on this time as a period of foolish intolerance and social backwardness, which we will replace with the standard of true equality and community.

I believe this Senate vote, while disappointing, should not be discouraging. To have achieved an up and down vote under the tumultuous circumstances of leadership conflicts and budget shortfalls is a real achievement. I also believe, along with the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., that while the arc of history is long, it bends toward justice, and justice here can only mean full equality. There should be no barriers that prevent loving couples from enjoying the rights and bearing the responsibilities of civil marriage. Just as we struck down the barriers that prevented interracial couples from

marrying, we should strike down the barriers that impede same sex couples and weaken their families. I look forward to continuing to championing the equality movement that will in the near future bring true civil equality to all New Yorkers.