

Testimony by Amy Hinze-Pifer
to the District of Columbia Board of Elections and Ethics

January 27, 2010

Good morning, and thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on this important issue. My name is Amy Hinze-Pifer, and my wife Rebecca and I are proud residents of the Kingman Park/Rosedale neighborhood in Ward 7. Rebecca has another commitment this morning and cannot be here, but she is the reason I am here today.

Rebecca and I moved to the District from Texas in 2004, and we began to make a life here. We wanted to get legally married, but at that time, it was not an option. Instead, we took all the steps we could think of to protect each other in case anything happened to one of us. We registered as domestic partners so we could have access to legal protections, such as visiting each other in the hospital if one of us were ill or injured. We wrote our wills and obtained powers of attorney for health care and financial matters. When we bought our house, we were careful to make sure it was titled correctly.

After the Council voted this summer to recognize marriages performed in other states, we realized we couldn't keep waiting for the District to grant us a marriage license. We took the first opportunity we had to travel to another state, and on October 2, 2009, we were married by a friendly Justice of the Peace in the State of Vermont. We have made our lives in the District, and we would rather have received our marriage license here as well. There are many other couples like us, District residents who are building their lives together based on love and commitment. They should not have to leave their home and travel far away to prove how much their commitment means.

If this referendum were placed on the ballot, it would not directly affect my marriage. My wife and I could afford to take time off of work and to travel to another state, and our marriage certificate is now safely with our other important records. But it would affect my friends, colleagues, and neighbors, people just like us who want the legal protections that will allow them to keep the promises they make to each other.

This referendum would also violate D.C.'s Human Rights Act by singling-out a specific group of people for exclusion from rights enjoyed by the rest. My sexual orientation does not make me less of a person than my straight friends and neighbors, and the Human Rights Act ensures I cannot be given fewer rights because of it. Rebecca and I are proud to call the District our home, and we are thankful to be just another married couple. Our human rights should never be put to a vote.