



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2015

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Rep. Mark Spreitzer introduces bill to secure marriage equality in Wisconsin

MADISON – Today, alongside a same-sex couple sharing their personal story, Representatives Mark Spreitzer (D-Beloit), JoCasta Zamarripa (D-Milwaukee), Chris Taylor (D-Madison) and Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) introduced the Marriage and Family Equality Act. This legislation would update Wisconsin statutes to account for marriage equality following the Supreme Court of the United States June 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

“Wisconsin law must be read in a gender neutral way that recognizes equal rights for all couples,” Rep. Spreitzer said. “However, because Wisconsin’s statutes are outdated, many same-sex couples still face legal challenges, particularly when seeking parental rights.”

The bill makes technical updates to Wisconsin law to account for marriage equality. The legislation changes references to “husband and wife” to instead refer to “spouse” or “spouses” and therefore include both same-sex and different-sex married couples. This includes changes to areas like recreational licenses and income tax, but also insurance coverage, retirement or death benefits, medical assistance, and most notably parentage and family law.

With respect to parental rights, the bill recognizes equality for same-sex married couples and their children by eliminating the confusion caused by explicit references only to “husbands,” “wives,” “mothers,” and “fathers.” The bill clarifies three key aspects of parentage for married couples:

- the right for married couples to jointly adopt children and for one spouse to adopt the other spouse’s child;
- the right for married couples to jointly have a child through artificial insemination of one of the spouses; and,
- the presumption that two people who have a child within their marriage are the parents of that child.

“Same-sex married couples should not have pay a lawyer and go to court to secure these basic rights,” Rep. Spreitzer said. “We think it fitting that at this time of year, we can bring comfort and joy to every legally married same-sex couple, and to every child of legally married same-sex parents in Wisconsin.”

Joining Rep. Spreitzer were Jamie Gaffke & Ruth Vater of Beloit, who shared personal stories of the legal challenges they faced when attempting to secure equal parental rights.

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