



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas K. Duane

Celebrating New York State's First Legal Same-Sex Marriages

THOMAS K. DUANE July 25, 2011



On Sunday, July 24, 2011 New York State's Marriage Equality Law took effect – exactly thirty days from the bill's historic Senate passage in Albany. For the first time in the history of New York State same-sex couples are granted the right to marry the one they love with full and equal protection under the law. Marriage in New York is now gender-neutral!

I was honored and humbled, as the law's longtime Senate sponsor, to witness New York City's first legal same-sex marriages. When New York City Clerk Michael McSweeney, declared the day's first couple, Connie Kopelov, 84, and Phyllis Siegel, 76, legally married, I

was overcome with tears of joy. When I became the first New York State legislator to introduce Marriage Equality legislation in 2001, I was told it wasn't worth the paper it was printed on; ten years later, Connie and Phyllis's love and commitment proved that nothing is impossible.

Throughout the day, my staff volunteered at the Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens City Clerk's offices as I greeted newlyweds, congratulated them on their special day and celebrated our collective political achievement.

July 24, 2011 will be viewed as one of the defining civil rights moments in New York State history. Seeing so many diverse, loving, same-sex couples celebrating their commitment in legally recognized marriage, made the years of hard work absolutely worth it.

But there is still much more to do. In order to achieve full marriage equality, I will work with my colleagues at the federal level to overturn the dreadful Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). Our rights must not be allowed to end at the state border. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions concerning the new marriage law or how to help in the DOMA repeal fight.

(photo by William Alatrisme)