

Case Nos. 14-1167(L), 14-1169, 14-1173
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

TIMOTHY B. BOSTIC, et al.

Plaintiffs-Appellees,

and

CHRISTY BERGHOFF, et al., on behalf of themselves and all
others similarly situated,

Intervenors,

v.

GEORGE E. SCHAEFER, III, in his official capacity as the Clerk of Court for
Norfolk Circuit Court,

Defendant-Appellant,

and

JANET M. RAINEY, in her official capacity as State Registrar of
Vital Records; **ROBERT F. MCDONNELL**, in his official capacity
as Governor of Virginia; **KENNETH T. CUCCINELLI, II**, in his
official capacity as Attorney General of Virginia,

Defendants,

and

MICHÈLE B. MCQUIGG, in her official capacity as Prince William County
Clerk of Circuit Court,

Intervenor/Defendant.

Appeal from The United States District Court for the Eastern District
of Virginia, Norfolk Division, Case No. 2:13-cv-00395-AWA-LRL
The Honorable Arenda L. Wright Allen, Presiding

**BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE BAY AREA LAWYERS FOR INDIVIDUAL
FREEDOM (“BALIF”), ET AL. IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS-
APPELLEES**

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON LLP

Jerome C. Roth

Nicole S. Phillis

Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

560 Mission Street, Twenty-Seventh Floor

San Francisco, CA 94105-2907

Telephone: (415) 512-4000

Facsimile: (415) 512-4077

Attorneys for *Amici Curiae* BALIF, et al.

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CORPORATE DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

None of *Amici Curiae* (identified in Appendix) has a parent corporation. No publicly held company owns more than 10% of stock in any of *Amici Curiae*.

STATEMENT OF INTEREST

Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (“BALIF”) is a bar association of more than 700 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (“LGBT”) members of the San Francisco Bay Area legal community. As the nation’s oldest and largest LGBT bar association, BALIF promotes the professional interests of its members and the legal interests of the LGBT community at large. To accomplish this mission, BALIF actively participates in public policy debates concerning the rights of LGBT individuals and families. BALIF frequently appears as *amicus curiae* in cases, like this one, where it believes it can provide valuable perspective and argument that will inform court decisions on matters of broad public importance.

Additional *amici* include a broad array of organizations, including national, metropolitan, local, and minority bar associations and national and local non-profit organizations. Each organization supporting this *amicus* brief is dedicated to ensuring that its constituents and all others in this country, including gay men and lesbians, receive equal treatment under the law. *See Appendix*. All parties have consented to *Amici*’s submission of this brief.¹

¹ Pursuant to Federal Rule of Appellate Procedure 32, *Amici Curiae* affirm that no counsel for any party authored this brief in whole or in part, and no counsel or party made a monetary contribution intended to fund the preparation or submission of this brief. No person other than *Amici Curiae*, their members, or their counsel made a monetary contribution to its preparation or submission.

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Foundational to the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment is the principle that “the Constitution ‘neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens.’” *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620, 623 (1996) (quoting *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, 559 (1896) (Harlan, J., dissenting)). In line with this principle, it has long been bedrock law that “separate but equal” treatment does not satisfy the federal Constitution. The very notion is a contradiction in terms: as the Supreme Court has emphasized since *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Constitution’s promise of true equality is necessarily breached by government-sponsored separation of a disfavored class. The statutory and constitutional bans that prohibit same-sex couples from marrying in Virginia (“the Marriage Bans”) betray these longstanding values. They exclude a class of people—gay men and lesbians—from the venerated institution of marriage.

This brief explains the harm inflicted on gay men and lesbians as a result of the Marriage Bans’ pernicious classification. It also explains how nothing short of or different from marriage itself can cure the constitutional violations. Specifically, this brief discusses why neither civil unions nor domestic partnerships, which are available to same-sex couples in some states (though not Virginia), would be an adequate or appropriate constitutional remedy. Because the Marriage Bans exclude committed same sex couples from access to the institution

of marriage, they and their families are separated out, stigmatized, deprived of benefits and responsibilities enjoyed by their heterosexual counterparts, and exposed to increased discrimination. These effects are repugnant to the Constitution's equality guarantee and are in no way mitigated by access to the separate and inherently inferior systems of domestic partnership or civil union. *Amici* urge this Court to uphold the district courts' conclusions and find that the Marriage Bans disadvantage gays and lesbians without any legitimate justification. *Bostic v. Rainey*, Civ. No. 2:13cv395, 2014 WL 561978 (E.D. Va. Feb. 13, 2014).

ARGUMENT

I. CLASSIFICATIONS THAT SERVE ONLY TO DISADVANTAGE THE BURDENED GROUP FAIL RATIONAL BASIS REVIEW

The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment is “a commitment to the law’s neutrality where the rights of persons are at stake.” *Romer*, 517 U.S. at 623. The Clause “requires the consideration of whether the classifications drawn by any statute constitute an arbitrary and invidious discrimination.” *Loving v. Virginia*, 388 U.S. 1, 10 (1967). Even under the most deferential review—the rational basis test—a state law must be “rationally related to a legitimate state interest.” *E.g., City of Cleburne, Tex. v. Cleburne Living Ctr.*, 473 U.S. 432, 440 (1985).² “The State may not rely on a classification whose

² Plaintiff-Appellee *Bostic* amply demonstrates, and *amici* agree, that the Marriage Bans should be subject to heightened scrutiny. *See, e.g., SmithKline Beecham*

relationship to an asserted goal is so attenuated as to render the distinction arbitrary or irrational.” *Id.* at 446.

A law that classifies persons for no reason other than to confer disfavored legal status fails even rational basis review because it serves no legitimate governmental purpose. *See Romer*, 517 U.S. at 633-35. As the Supreme Court repeatedly has explained, “[i]f the constitutional conception of ‘equal protection of the laws’ means anything, it must at the very least mean that a bare . . . desire to harm a politically unpopular group cannot constitute a *legitimate* governmental interest.” *Id.* at 634-35 (quoting *Dep’t of Agric. v. Moreno*, 413 U.S. 528, 534 (1973)). Accordingly, in *Romer*, the Supreme Court struck down a Colorado constitutional amendment that prohibited governmental protection of gay and lesbian individuals. *Id.* at 635-36. The amendment, the Court found, was a “status-based enactment” that “impose[d] a special disability upon [gays and lesbians] alone.” *Id.* at 631, 635. It “inflict[ed] on [gays and lesbians] immediate, continuing, and real injuries that outrun and belie any legitimate justifications that may be claimed for it.” *Id.* at 635; *see also Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 405 U.S. 438, 454-

Corp. v. Abbott Labs., 740 F.3d 471, 480 (9th Cir. 2014) (holding that distinctions based on sexual orientation are subject to heightened scrutiny). However, as this brief explains, the Marriage Bans’ failure to advance a legitimate governmental purpose causes them to fail under even the most deferential standard of review.

55 (1972) (law prohibiting distribution of contraceptives to unmarried individuals lacked a rational basis and violated the Equal Protection Clause).

So too, here. The injuries that the Marriage Bans inflict upon gay men and lesbians, as *amici* explain below, “outrun and belie” any legitimate governmental purpose that might be claimed for them.

II. THE MARRIAGE BANS ESTABLISH AN UNEQUAL, TWO-TIERED REGIME AND HARM GAY AND LESBIAN INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR CHILDREN

The Marriage Bans’ overt discrimination against same-sex couples in Virginia establishes a regime in which same-sex couples are not simply relegated to second-class status, but rather are not recognized – and therefore do not “count” – at all. Further, as explained below, the availability of domestic partnership or civil union as exists in some other states would not cure the Marriage Bans’ constitutional deficiency. Whether or not such options are available, by excluding same-sex couples from marriage itself, the Marriage Bans cause severe, actual harm to gay and lesbian individuals and their families.

A. The Legalistic Designation of Domestic Partnership Is Patently Inferior to the Revered Institution of Marriage

Time-honored precedent establishes that state-created, separate institutions for disfavored groups are inherently unequal. As the Supreme Court has repeatedly recognized since *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483, 495 (1954), such separate institutions offend the guarantees of the Equal Protection

Clause. *See, e.g., Mayor & City Council of Balt. v. Dawson*, 350 U.S. 877 (1955) (public beaches and bathhouses); *Holmes v. City of Atlanta*, 350 U.S. 879 (1955) (public golf courses); *Gayle v. Browder*, 352 U.S. 903 (1956) (public transportation); *New Orleans City Park Improvement Ass'n v. Detiege*, 358 U.S. 54 (1958) (public parks); *Peterson v. City of Greenville*, 373 U.S. 244 (1963) (restaurants); *Brown v. Louisiana*, 383 U.S. 131 (1966) (public libraries).

Even where separate institutions have the trappings of their more well-regarded counterparts, inequalities remain by definition. Though some distinctions may be intangible, their social significance is real, and they remain constitutionally impermissible. *See Sweatt v. Painter*, 339 U.S. 629, 634 (1950) (noting, in striking down Texas's segregated law schools, that "the [all-white] Law School possesses to a far greater degree those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for greatness in a law school"); *United States v. Virginia*, 518 U.S. 515, 557 (1996) (holding that Virginia could not restrict women to a military program that lacked, among other features, the "prestige" of Virginia Military Institute).

Nor would the blatant separation wrought by the Marriage Bans be cured by shunting same-sex couples into something short of real marriage, such as the legalistic apparatus of "domestic partnership" or "civil union." Both of these are different from and inferior to marriage. Even if domestic partnership were

available in Virginia, that would not remedy the harm caused by the exclusion from marriage but rather would provide a square peg for a round hole. As in *Sweatt*, “[i]t is difficult to believe that one who had a free choice” between domestic partnership or civil union and true marriage “would consider the question close.” *Sweatt*, 339 U.S. at 634.

1. Marriage Is a Uniquely Revered Institution in American Society

Marriage holds a hallowed status in our society. As courts repeatedly recognize, marriage can be an essential aspect of the human experience. Far “more than a routine classification for purposes of certain statutory benefits,” *United States v. Windsor*, 133 S. Ct. 2675, 2692 (2013), marriage is “an institution of transcendent historical, cultural and social significance,” *Kerrigan v. Comm’r of Pub. Health*, 957 A.2d 407, 418 (Conn. 2008), “an institution more basic in our civilization than any other.” *Williams v. North Carolina*, 317 U.S. 287, 303 (1942). Its significance to the couple involved is unparalleled; it is “intimate to the degree of being sacred.” *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479, 486 (1965). Furthermore, marriage is a time-honored demonstration to family, friends, and the community of a loving commitment and mutual responsibility between two people—and implies a return promise by society to respect that commitment. See *Turner v. Safley*, 482 U.S. 78, 95 (1987) (recognizing that marriage is an “expression[] of emotional support and public commitment”). The institution is “a

highly public celebration of the ideals of mutuality, companionship, intimacy, fidelity, and family.” *Goodridge v. Dep’t of Pub. Health*, 798 N.E.2d 941, 954 (Mass. 2003). The right to marry, accordingly, “has long been recognized as one of the vital personal rights essential to the orderly pursuit of happiness by free men [and women].” *Loving*, 388 U.S. at 12; *see also Perez v. Lippold*, 198 P.2d 17, 18-19 (Cal. 1948) (“Marriage is . . . something more than a civil contract subject to regulation by the state; it is a fundamental right of free men.”). The enormous personal and social significance of marriage is, indeed, a core premise of the decisions below. *See, e.g., Jackson v. Abercrombie*, 884 F. Supp. 2d 1065, 1108 (D. Haw. 2012) (explaining that “the title ‘marriage’ has social benefits and cultural meaning”).

As a result of the special significance of marriage in society, the institution has a critical “signaling” role, apart from the specific legal obligations it entails. Elizabeth S. Scott, *Social Norms and the Legal Regulation of Marriage*, 86 Va. L. Rev. 1901, 1917 (2000). The designation of marriage establishes norms for how the two married individuals conduct themselves and how society behaves toward them.

First, married people understand they are to be emotionally and financially supportive, honest, and faithful to one another. *See Robert A. Burt, Belonging in America: How to Understand Same-Sex Marriage*, 25 BYU J. Pub. L. 351, 357

(2011) (noting that “[t]his faithfulness has always been at the core of the marital status for mixed-sex couples”). Although married couples may modify their expectations and behavior over time, they benefit by beginning with a common understanding of the marital relationship, gleaned from a lifetime of participating in society, hearing about marriage, and observing married couples. See Jeffrey M. Adams & Warren H. Jones, *The Conceptualization of Marital Commitment: An Integrative Analysis*, 72 J. Personality Soc. Psychol. 1177 (1997). This shared understanding assists married individuals in meeting their own and their spouse’s expectations and motivates them to work through temporary difficulties. *Id.* The institution of marriage likewise provides common ground for others in society to understand a couple’s relationship. Because marriage is universally recognized, married couples are readily treated in a manner that reflects their personal commitment and concomitant legal and social status. *Goodridge*, 798 N.E.2d at 955 (“Because [marriage] fulfills yearnings for security, safe haven, and connection that express our common humanity, civil marriage is an esteemed institution, and the decision whether and whom to marry is among life’s momentous acts of self-definition.”). Spouses are understood as family members. When a married couple opens a joint bank account, or checks into a hotel, or applies for a credit card, or attends a parent-teacher conference, or accompanies a child on a plane flight, or jointly rents a car, there is no need for explanation or

documentary proof of the relationship. *See generally Varnum v. Brien*, 763 N.W.2d 862, 883-84 (Iowa 2009) (“Iowa’s marriage laws” are “designed to bring a sense of order to the legal relationships of committed couples and their families in myriad ways.”).

For these reasons and others, many people regard getting married as the most important day in their lives—indeed, marriage “is the centerpiece of our entire social structure.” Thomas B. Stoddard, *Why Gay People Should Seek the Right to Marry*, *Out/Look: Nat'l Gay & Lesbian Q.*, Fall 1989.

2. Statutory Schemes that Recognize Domestic Partnership and Civil Unions Are Legalistic Mechanisms That Lack the Significance, Stability, and Meaning of Marriage

Nor would shifting to a scheme that recognizes domestic partnership and civil unions remedy the harm caused by the exclusion of same-sex couples from the institution of marriage. Domestic partnership and civil unions plainly lack the status, cultural significance, and social meaning of marriage. Unlike marriage, these legalistic categories are not an effective marker of family relationships. And same-sex couples who have access only to domestic partnerships or civil unions are deprived of many of the tangible and intangible benefits and responsibilities that come with the marital commitment. First, the legal categories of domestic partnership and civil unions are novel and unstable. These categories were

invented recently,³ and their meaning is ever-shifting. Even the name of the category varies from state to state. *Compare* Nev. Rev. Stat. § 122A (2013) (“Domestic Partnership”) *with* Haw. Rev. Stat. § 572B (2013) (“Civil Union”). For example, in Hawaii, both the names and legal contours of the second-tier protections for same sex couples have continued to shift in ways that perpetuate confusion and signify inferior status for same-sex couples.⁴ Domestic partnership first began in California as a term used in local ordinances that conferred few legal benefits. It is now one of several labels available in different states to registered same-sex couples who are prohibited from marrying. In contrast, Nevada modeled its domestic partnership statute on California’s revised domestic partnership statute, which provides that domestic partners must receive the same legal entitlements as married couples. In Hawaii, the civil union statute is intended to serve the same purpose, but using an entirely different name. These different and

³ The City of West Hollywood enacted the first domestic partnership ordinance in the mid-1980s.

⁴ In 1997, Hawaii’s legislature passed the Reciprocal Beneficiaries Act, which allowed any two individuals who were prohibited from marrying (“such as a widowed mother and her unmarried son”) to obtain approximately 60 of the rights associated with marriage. *See* Haw. Rev. Stat. § 572C-2 (2013) ; *see also id.* at § 572C-6 (“Unless otherwise expressly provided by law, reciprocal beneficiaries shall not have the same rights and obligations under the law that are conferred through marriage . . .”). Over a decade later, in 2011, “[a]fter several failed attempts,” the legislature passed a civil unions law. *Jackson*, 884 F. Supp. 2d at 1076. That law gives the two members of a civil union all the legal rights given to married couples, except the title of “marriage.” *See* Haw. Rev. Stat. § 572B (2013).

inconsistent labels further obscure the legal rights and responsibilities of same sex couples. *See Jackson*, 884 F. Supp. 2d. at 1077; *Sevcik v. Sandoval*, 911 F. Supp. 2d 996, 1001 (D. Nev. 2012).

Not surprisingly, in light of their novel and uncertain stature, domestic partnership and civil unions are not valued by society in a way that compares to marriage. People do not associate these legalistic relationships with the stability and permanence that characterize marriage. This is evident in the way government treats domestic partnership. In Nevada, for example, domestic partners need not solemnize their partnership, whereas marriage requires solemnization by a judge, justice or minister. *See Sevcik*, 911 F. Supp. 2d at 1000-01.

In turn, the registration of a domestic partnership is less meaningful to same-sex couples than getting married would be. The complex emotions that people experience when they get married are well-established—as well as the joy and human closeness they feel when they attend a wedding—simply do not attach to the ministerial step of registering a domestic partnership or entering a civil union. Even when domestic partners celebrate their legal registration with a ceremony, the terrain is unfamiliar: Is the event a wedding? A commitment ceremony? Something else? The lack of a common vocabulary underscores the institution's lack of societal stature.

These reminders continue throughout the relationship. Even the simple act of referring to one's "partner" can be wrought with embarrassment and misunderstanding: same-sex couples can be left searching for a manner to explain, no matter how uncomfortable the setting, whether they are referring to their *domestic* partner or their professional, athletic, or law partners. Subsequently, same-sex couples must often explain the intricacies of state family law to friends and potentially hostile strangers alike.

Such ambiguities, and the resulting risk of differential treatment, would be less likely if same-sex couples could accurately refer to themselves as "married" and as husband or wife, a vocabulary that is universally understood. *See* N.J. Civ. Union Rev. Comm'n, *The Legal, Medical, Economic and Social Consequences of New Jersey's Civil Union Law 2*, 16 (Dec. 10, 2008), available at <http://www.nj.gov/lps/dcr/downloads/CURC-Final-Report-.pdf> ("New Jersey Commission Report").

In sum, marriage has a unique status in American society. There is no dispute that marriage means far more than inheritance rights, powers of attorney, or community property. It is, instead, the ultimate symbol of "unequaled commitment." Evan Wolfson, *Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry* 6 (2004). Domestic partnership would be a patently inferior alternative. Simply put: "No matter what language people speak—from

Arabic to Yiddish, from Chinook to Chinese—*marriage* is what we use to describe a specific relationship of love and dedication to another person. It is how we explain the families that are united because of that love. And it universally signifies a level of self-sacrifice and responsibility and a stage of life unlike any other.” *Id.* at 3 (emphasis added).

B. Excluding Same-Sex Couples From the Institution of Marriage Causes Tangible Legal and Economic Harm

Exclusion of same-sex couples from the institution of marriage results in the denial of many real and concrete legal and economic benefits that are premised upon *married* status. *See generally* M.V. Lee Badgett, *The Economic Value of Marriage for Same-Sex Couples*, 58 Drake L. Rev. 1081 (2010). Because they are not married, same-sex couples may be denied employment-related benefits and may have limited access to affordable employment-based health insurance. *Id.* at 1084 (explaining that “coverage for same-sex domestic partners is still relatively rare”). Many same-sex couples eschew domestic partnerships due to their lesser status. Those couples are denied even the limited economic and legal protections that accrue to that designation.

More generally, marriage confers numerous economic benefits that stem from the unique commitment it represents. For example, marriage fosters greater specialization of labor, which can increase a couple’s income and the time available for family. *Id.* at 1102. Marriage also tends to reduce a couple’s

transaction costs: marriage “promotes economic efficiency by reducing transaction costs for couples, mainly by removing the need to renegotiate the terms of the legal relationship as couples experience changed circumstances.” *Id.* at 1101.

Furthermore, married individuals may enjoy greater employment-related economic gains, whereas same-sex couples who cannot marry face discrimination that may adversely affect their work performance and related economic rewards. *Id.* at 1102-03. Though difficult to quantify, these economic benefits of marriage are well-known and acknowledged in the field of economics. *Id.*

Even in states that recognize domestic partnerships, domestic partners are afforded fewer rights than those offered to married couples. For example, in Nevada, domestic partners receive some, but not all, of the rights and responsibilities afforded to married couples. For example, employers are not required technically to provide health care benefits for domestic partners of their employees. Nev. Rev. Stat. § 122A.210(1) (2013). The fact that domestic partnership in Nevada is also open to different-sex couples confirms that it provides a different set of rights from those afforded by marriage. Nev. Rev. Stat. § 122A.100 (1)-(2) (2013). Similarly, Maine, which adopted a same-sex marriage provision by popular vote in November 2012, advises citizens to “remember that a registered domestic partnership is NOT the same as a marriage and does not entitle partners to rights other than those for which the registry was intended,” namely

“rights of inheritance, as well as the right to make decisions regarding disposal of their deceased partner’s remains.”⁵ In New York City, domestic partners may enjoy, *inter alia*, visitation rights and city health benefits, but “[l]awfully married individuals, including individuals in same-sex marriages, are entitled to more New York State rights and benefits than those registered as domestic partners.”⁶

C. In the Wake of the Supreme Court’s Decision in *Windsor*, the Tangible Benefits Associated with Marriage Are Even More Substantial.

The availability of federal benefits to married couples further demonstrates that the Marriage Bans inflict real economic and legal harm on same-sex couples. Statutory schemes that recognize domestic partnerships and civil unions but not marriage of same-sex couples result in the deprivation of federal benefits because many federal agencies offer such benefits only to lawfully *married* couples. Now that the Supreme Court’s decision in *Windsor* invalidated Section 3 of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (“DOMA”), which prohibited federal recognition of the validity of same-sex couples’ marriages, 133 S.Ct. at

⁵ See Me. Dep’t of Health and Human Servs., *Instructions and Information for Declaration of Domestic Partnerships 2* (2011), available at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/data-research/vital-records/documents/pdf-files/dompartinst.pdf>.

⁶ See Office of the City Clerk, City of N.Y., Domestic Partnership Registration, available at http://www.cityclerk.nyc.gov/html/marriage/domestic_partnership_reg.shtml#discclaimer (listing rights of marriage that do not attach to domestic partnerships).

2695, a growing chasm separates the protections available to same-sex couples who are lawfully married under their state's legal regime from those who are merely joined in domestic partnership or civil union.

The federal government uses "marriage" as a threshold for many federal protections and responsibilities. By defining "marriage" and "spouse" for federal purposes, Section 3 of DOMA effectively "control[led] over 1,000 federal laws" where marital or spousal status is a factor. *Windsor*, 133 S.Ct. at 2683 (citing U.S. Gov't Accountability Office, GA0-04-353R, *Defense of Marriage Act: Update to Prior Report 1* (2004)). By denying same-sex couples the right to marry, Virginia has placed those federal protections and responsibilities entirely off-limits to them. *See generally Garden State Equality v. Dow*, 216 N.J. 314 (2013).

On the same day *Windsor* was decided, the President ordered a complete and comprehensive review of "all relevant federal statutes to ensure [the] decision, including its implications for Federal benefits and obligations, is implemented swiftly and smoothly." *Statement by the President on the Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act*, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/06/26/supreme-court-strikes-down-defense-marriage-act> (June 26, 2013). In striking down Section 3 of DOMA, the Supreme Court confined its holding to "lawful marriages." *Windsor*, 133. S.Ct. at 2696. Consistent with their existing benefits frameworks, the agencies that have taken

action to date in response to the President's directive have extended protections and responsibilities to *married* same-sex couples and many agencies explicitly *do not* extend protections to registered domestic partners.⁷ For example, in its extensive guidance regarding federal benefits post-*Windsor*, the Office of Personnel Management expressly provided that “[b]enefits coverage is now available to a legally married same-sex spouse of a Federal employee or annuitant,” but “same-sex couples who are in a civil union or other forms of domestic partnership . . . will remain ineligible for most Federal benefits programs.” Office of Personnel Management, Benefits Admin. Letter, *Coverage of Same –Sex Spouses*, No. 13-203, July 17, 2013) at 1-2.

Likewise, on August 29, 2013, the Internal Revenue Service (“IRS”) ruled that all legal marriages of same-sex couples will be respected for federal tax purposes. Rev. Rul. 2013-17, 2013-381.R.B. (“For Federal tax purposes, the terms ‘spouse,’ ‘husband and wife,’ ‘husband,’ and ‘wife’ include an individual married to a person of the same sex if the individuals are lawfully married under state law, and . . . the term ‘marriage’ includes such a marriage between individuals of the

⁷ To date, the federal government agencies extending protections based on lawful marriage include the Office of Personnel Management, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of State, the Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service, the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Office of Governmental Ethics, and the Federal Elections Commission.

same sex.”). However, the Revenue Ruling also specifically held that marital protections do not extend to persons “who have entered into a registered domestic partnership, civil union, or other similar formal relationship recognized under state law that is not denominated as a marriage under the laws of that state” *Id.*

In the immigration context, whether a same-sex couple is lawfully *married* or merely in a domestic partnership or civil union could mean the difference between deportation and a valid basis for a family-based immigration visa. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (“USCIS”) has made clear that “same-sex marriages will be treated exactly the same as opposite-sex marriages” including, for example, with respect to eligibility for discretionary waivers of certain inadmissibility grounds based on marriage or status of a spouse, USCIS, *Same Sex Marriages* (March 2, 2014, last reviewed/updated Apr. 3, 2014), available at <http://www.uscis.gov/family/same-sex-marriages>, at QA 9, and to the residency period required for naturalization of non-citizens married to U.S. citizens, *id.* at QA 8. These benefits would not be available to same-sex couples in domestic partnerships or civil unions.⁸

⁸ Certain governmental agencies, including the USCIS, have stated that “[a]s a general matter, the law of the place where the marriage was celebrated determines whether the marriage is legally valid for immigration purposes. . . . The domicile state’s laws and policies on same-sex marriages will not bear on whether USCIS will recognize a marriage as valid.” USCIS, *Same Sex Marriages* (March 2, 2014), available at <http://www.uscis.gov/family/same-sex-marriages>, at QA 3. This means that a same-sex couple living in a state with just civil unions or domestic

The guidance and policies issued by the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense and the Department of State further exemplify the primacy of lawful *marriage* in extending federal benefits to same-sex couples. On July 1, 2013, then-Secretary of Homeland Security Napolitano directed the USCIS to “review immigration visa petitions filed on behalf of a same-sex spouse in the same manner as those filed on behalf of an opposite-sex spouse.” *Statement by Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano on the Implementation of the Supreme Court Ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act*, dhs.gov (July 1, 2013), <http://www.dhs.gov/news/2013/07/01/statement-secretary-homeland-security-janet-napolitano-implementation-supreme-court>.⁹ The Department of State followed suit, beginning with Secretary Kerry’s announcement that U.S. embassies and consulates would adjudicate visa applications based on a marriage of a same-sex couple in the same way that they adjudicate applications for different-sex spouses. *Announcement on Visa Changes for Same-Sex Couples*, (Aug. 2, 2013),

partnership, as well as such couples living in states that lack even these procedures, would be required to bear the burden of travelling out of state, away from their friends and families, to qualify for the same federal benefits afforded to heterosexual married couples.

⁹ That directive was formalized on July 26, 2013. See USCIS, *Same-Sex Marriages* (July 26, 2013), available at <http://www.uscis.gov/family/same-sex-marriages> (“USCIS FAQ”). See also U.S. *Visas for Same-Sex Spouses*, travel.state.gov, available at <http://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/DOMA/DOMA%20FAQs.pdf> (last visited Oct. 23, 2013) (spousal eligibility based on valid marriage) (“Visa FAQ”).

available at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/08/212643.htm>.

Similarly, in August 2013, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel advised that “[i]t is now the Department’s policy to treat all married military personnel equally. The Department will construe the words ‘spouse’ and ‘marriage’ to include same-sex spouses and marriages, and the Department will work to make the same benefits available to all military spouses, regardless of whether they are in same-sex or opposite-sex marriages.” Department of Defense, Memo. From Sec’y Chuck Hagel, *Extending Benefits to the Same-Sex Spouses of Military Members* at 1 (Aug. 13, 2013), *available at* <http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2013/docs/Extending-Benefits-to-Same-Sex-Spouses-of-Military-Members.pdf>. Though the availability of federal benefits continues to evolve, agency guidance makes clear that the threshold requirement to attain many of these benefits is lawful *marriage* – not a civil union or domestic partnership.

D. Excluding Same-Sex Couples from Marriage Perpetuates Discrimination Against Gay Men and Lesbians

The Marriage Bans also cause real and intangible harms to same-sex couples and their immediate and extended families. Even to the extent that a domestic partnership or civil union may confer legal benefits of marriage, the two-tiered regime disadvantages same-sex couples in numerous ways. First, banning same-sex couples from the valued institution of marriage makes them “other,” and

demeans and stigmatizes them. This stigma, in turn, affects their physical and emotional health and well-being and encourages further discrimination against gay and lesbian individuals. This in turn causes “minority stress” that harms their physical and emotional well-being, and face increased discrimination.

1. Excluding Same-Sex Couples from Marriage Expresses Government Disapproval of Same-Sex Relationships

The two-tiered regime that the Marriage Bans establish conveys official disapproval of same-sex relationships. As the California Supreme Court explained in finding that domestic partnership was not a constitutionally adequate substitute for marriage:

[T]he statutory provisions that continue to limit access to [marriage] exclusively to opposite-sex couples—while providing only a novel, alternative institution for same-sex couples—likely will be viewed as an official statement that the family relationship of same-sex couples is not of comparable stature or equal dignity to the family relationship of opposite-sex couples.

In re Marriage Cases, 183 P.3d 384, 452 (Cal. 2008). To that end, the Court reasoned:

[T]here is a very significant risk that retaining a distinction in nomenclature with regard to this most fundamental of relationships whereby the term ‘marriage’ is denied only to same-sex couples inevitably will cause the new parallel institution that has been made available to those couples to be viewed as of a lesser stature than marriage and, in effect, as a mark of second-class citizenship.

Id., 183 P.3d at 445; *see also Kerrigan*, 957 A.2d at 474 (“[B]ecause of the long and celebrated history of the term ‘marriage’ and the widespread understanding that this word describes a family relationship unreservedly sanctioned by the community, the statutory provisions that continue to limit access to this designation exclusively to opposite-sex couples—while providing only a novel, alternative institution for same-sex couples—likely will be viewed as an official statement that the family relationship of same-sex couples is not of comparable stature or equal dignity to the family relationship of opposite-sex couples.”) (citing *In re Marriage Cases*, 43 Cal. 4th at 855); *Goodridge*, 798 N.E.2d at 962 (statutory bar on marriage for same-sex couples “confers an official stamp of approval on the destructive stereotype that same-sex relationships are inherently unstable and inferior to opposite-sex relationships and are not worthy of respect”).

The government disapproval expressed through the Marriage Bans is likewise constitutionally suspect in light of the motivations that underlie the legislation. As was true of Section 3 of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, the Marriage Bans’ “principal effect is to identify a subset of [relationships] and make them unequal. The principal purpose is to impose inequality.” *Windsor*, 133 S. Ct. at 2694. Although Appellants contended that the “primary purpose for recognizing and regulating marriage is responsible procreation and child-rearing,” the district court rejected this claim, finding that the purpose of the Bans was to “target a

subset (gay and lesbian individuals) who are similarly situated to Virginia's heterosexual individuals, and deprive that subset of the opportunity to marry.”

Bostic, 2014 WL 561978, at *21.

The Marriage Bans' disapproval of same-sex couples is stigmatizing. Both judicial decisions and social science have recognized that government action singling out a group for disfavored treatment stigmatizes that group. *See Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558, 575 (2003) (stating that the “stigma” imposed by the Texas statute criminalizing “homosexual conduct” was “not trivial”); *Brown*, 347 U.S. at 494 (describing the “feeling of inferiority” that inevitably accompanies differential treatment); *Strauder v. West Virginia*, 100 U.S. 303, 308 (1879), *abrogated on other grounds by Taylor v. Louisiana*, 419 U.S. 522 (1975) (noting that exclusion of non-white citizens from juries was “practically a brand upon them, affixed by the law, an assertion of their inferiority”).

2. The Stigma Created by the Marriage Bans Causes Emotional and Physical Harm

The stigma resulting from the Marriage Bans' two-tiered regime has harmful consequences. That stigma can cause gay men and lesbians to suffer “minority stress,” which manifests itself through “prejudice events”: expectations of rejection and discrimination; concealment of identity; and internalized homophobia. *See* Ilan H. Meyer, *Prejudice, Social Stress, and Mental Health in Lesbian, Gay and*

Bisexual Populations: Conceptual Issues and Research Evidence, 129 Psychol. Bull. 674 (2003).

Such stresses negatively affect the mental health and well-being of gay and lesbian individuals. *See, e.g.*, Gilbert Herdt & Robert Kertzner, *I Do, But I Can't: The Impact of Marriage Denial on the Mental Health and Sexual Citizenship of Lesbians and Gay Men in the United States*, 3 J. Sexuality Res. Soc. Policy 33 (2006). “Greater exposure to discrimination and perceptions of stigma have been linked with poorer mental health in sexual minority individuals.” Adam W. Fingerhut, Letitia Anne Peplau, Shelly L. Gable, *Identity, Minority Stress and Psychological Well-Being Among Gay Men and Lesbians*, 1 Psychology & Sexuality 101, 105 (2010). Internalized homophobia, for example, can lead to lowered self-esteem, anxiety, substance abuse, and depression. Gregory M. Herek et al., *Correlates of Internalized Homophobia in a Community Sample of Lesbians and Gay Men*, 2 J. Gay Lesbian Med. Assoc. 17 (1997). And recent suicides by gay teenagers “has drawn national attention to the insidious peer harassment that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth face on a daily basis.” Lisa C. Connolly, *Anti-Gay Bullying in Schools--Are Anti-Bullying Statutes the Solution?*, 87 N.Y.U. L. Rev. 248, 249 (2012).

3. The Stigma Created by the Marriage Bans Perpetuates Discrimination Against Gay Men and Lesbians

By making sexual orientation a legally salient characteristic, the Marriage Bans also encourage and provide cover for those who seek to treat gay men and lesbians differently based on their sexual orientation. *See, e.g., Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, 704 F. Supp. 2d 921, 979 (N.D. Cal. 2010) (describing how Proposition 8 sent “a message that gay relationships are not to be respected; that they are of secondary value, if of any value at all; that they are certainly not equal to those of heterosexuals”). Because the state provides for separate and lesser treatment of gay men and lesbians, individuals may logically conclude that it is permissible to treat them as inferior. *Cf. Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 575 (criminalizing sexual conduct between same-sex couples was “an invitation to subject homosexual persons to discrimination both in the public and in the private spheres”); *Strauder*, 100 U.S. at 308 (exclusion of non-white citizens from juries was “a stimulant to . . . race prejudice”).

Moreover, designating same-sex couples as different can trigger unintentional discrimination. Due to confusion regarding legal requirements, hospitals may refuse to allow a same-sex partner to be by a loved one’s side during a medical emergency, and doctors may not permit domestic partners to make medical decisions on behalf of an incapacitated partner. In an analogous context, the New Jersey Civil Union Review Commission received testimony that gay and

lesbian individuals who were legally entitled to hospital visitation rights were delayed in gaining access to their hospitalized partners. For example, a woman whose partner was admitted to the emergency room with a potentially fatal cardiac arrhythmia was temporarily prevented from getting information about her partner's condition because the doctor was unfamiliar with civil unions. *See* New Jersey Commission Report at 1; *see also id.* at 14-15 (providing additional examples). Furthermore, employers may be less understanding of an employee's need to take leave to care for a domestic partner. *Id.* at 21 (testimony explaining that Massachusetts' marriage equality law has had the effect that, "without the term 'civil union' or 'domestic partner' to hide behind, if [employers] don't give equal benefits to employees in same-sex marriages, these employers would have to come forth with the real excuse for discrimination"). Even family members may not understand either the level of commitment expected of a domestic partner towards the couple's child, or the degree of attachment of the child to a domestic partner.

Moreover, by segregating gay men and lesbians, the Marriage Bans cause society to focus on sexual orientation to the exclusion of other characteristics. As with segregation on the basis of race, separating gay men and lesbians based on their sexual orientation causes that aspect of their identity to eclipse other attributes. *See* Robin A. Lenhardt, *Understanding the Mark: Race, Stigma, and Equality in Context*, 79 N.Y.U. L. Rev. 803, 818-19 (2004). Thus, when gay men

or lesbians disclose that they are in a domestic partnership, others often see them *only* as gay—and treat them accordingly—rather than viewing them as full persons entitled to the same respect and dignity given to other members of society. *See generally* Marc R. Poirier, *Name Calling: Identifying Stigma in the “Civil Union”/ “Marriage” Distinction*, 41 Conn. L. Rev. 1425, 1429-30, 1479-89 (2009) (describing the way in which the nomenclature distinction perpetuates bias and facilitates discrimination).

CONCLUSION

Numerous racial and religious minorities have, at various times in history, faced restrictions on their privilege to marry. *See* Nancy Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* 4 (2000). But “[a] prime part of the history of our Constitution . . . is the story of the extension of constitutional rights and protections to people once ignored or excluded.” *Virginia*, 518 U.S. at 557. The Marriage Bans create a separate and unequal regime for a disfavored class. By excluding same-sex couples from the hallowed, state-sponsored institution of marriage, the Marriage Bans inflict “immediate, continuing, and real injur[y]” on gay and lesbian individuals. *Romer*, 517 U.S. at 635. Gay men and lesbians and their families are deprived of meaningful benefits; suffer from state-sanctioned stigma; and are exposed to further discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation. The patently separate-but-unequal regime effected by the Marriage

Bans fails any level of judicial scrutiny. Amici urge this court to find that the Marriage Bans are unconstitutional.

DATED: April 18, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON LLP
JEROME C. ROTH
NICOLE S. PHILLIS

s/ Jerome C. Roth

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON, LLP
560 Mission Street, 27th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-2907
Telephone: (415) 512-4000
Email: Jerome.Roth@mto.com
Nicole.Phillis@mto.com

Attorneys for *Amici Curiae*, BALIF, et al.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE WITH RULE 32(a)

1. This brief complies with the type-volume limitation of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B) because this brief contains 6,250 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(7)(B)(iii).
2. This brief complies with the typeface requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(6) because this brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Microsoft Word 2010 in 14 point Times New Roman font.

DATED: April 18, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON LLP

JEROME C. ROTH

NICOLE S. PHILLIS

560 Mission Street, 27th Floor

San Francisco, CA 94105-2907

Telephone: (415) 512-4000

Email: Jerome.Roth@mto.com

Nicole.Phillis@mto.com

s/ Jerome C. Roth

Attorneys for *Amici Curiae*, BALIF, et al.

CERTIFICATION OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on April 18, 2014, I electronically filed the foregoing BRIEF OF AMICI CURIAE BAY AREA LAWYERS FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM (“BALIF”), ET AL. IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS-APPELLEES with the Clerk of court using the CM/ECF System, and served on all parties or their counsel of record through the CM/ECF system if they are registered users or, if they are not, by service a true and correct copy at the addresses listed below:

David A. Robinson
P. O. Box 780
North Haven, CT 06473

DATED: April 18, 2014

MUNGER, TOLLES & OLSON LLP
JEROME C. ROTH
NICOLE S. PHILLIS
560 Mission Street, 27th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-2907
Telephone: (415) 512-4000
Email: Jerome.Roth@mto.com
Nicole.Phillis@mto.com

s/ Jerome C. Roth

Attorneys for *Amici Curiae*, BALIF, et al.

APPENDIX: STATEMENTS OF AMICI

Amici respectfully submit the following statements regarding their interests in this matter:

Austin LGBT Bar Association (“Austin LGBT Bar”)

The Austin LGBT Bar Association (“Austin LGBT Bar”) is a membership organization comprised of over 100 attorneys, judges, and law students located in Austin, Texas. It has a voting member on the Board of Directors of the Austin Travis County Bar Association. The Austin LGBT Bar conducts bi-monthly certified continuing legal education programs on the laws and statutes that impact the lives of LGBT persons and implements mentoring programs for law students. In addition to promoting education on issues relating to LGBT law, one of the stated purposes of the Austin LGBT Bar is to help raise the profile and acceptance of LGBT individuals within the legal community and to serve as examples for professionalism. The Austin LGBT Bar works hard to educate Texas attorneys on how to best represent their gay and lesbian clients in the extremely difficult climate that exists due to a disparate and unequal treatment of LGBT persons under the law – particularly with regard to gay and lesbian families.

Bar Association of San Francisco (“BASF”)

The Bar Association of San Francisco (“BASF”) is a nonprofit voluntary membership organization of attorneys, law students, and legal professionals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Founded in 1872, BASF enjoys the support of more than 7,500 individuals, law firms, corporate legal departments, and law schools. Through its board of directors, committees, volunteer legal services programs, and other community efforts, BASF has worked to promote and achieve equal justice for all and oppose discrimination in all its forms, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, sex, disability, and sexual orientation.

Freedom to Marry

Freedom to Marry is the campaign to win marriage nationwide. Freedom to Marry works with partner organizations and individuals to win marriage in more states, solidify and diversify the majority for marriage, and challenge and end federal marriage discrimination. Freedom to Marry is based in New York, and has participated as amicus curiae in several marriage cases in the United States and abroad.

The GLBT Bar Association of Washington (“QLaw”)

QLaw, the GLBT Bar Association of Washington, is an association of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) legal professionals and their friends. QLaw serves as a voice for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender

lawyers and other legal professionals in the state of Washington on issues relating to diversity and equality in the legal profession, in the courts, and under the law. The organization has five purposes: to provide opportunities for members of the GLBT legal community to meet in a supportive, professional atmosphere to exchange ideas and information; to further the professional development of GLBT legal professionals and law students; to educate the public, the legal profession, and the courts about legal issues of particular concern to the GLBT community; to empower members of the GLBT community by improving access to the legal and judicial system and sponsoring education programs; and to promote and encourage the advancement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender attorneys in the legal profession.

Latina & Latino Critical Legal Theory, Inc. (“LatCrit”)

Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory, Inc. (“LatCrit”) is a non-profit organization dedicated to (1) the production of critical and interdisciplinary “outsider jurisprudence”; (2) the promotion of substantive social transformation; (3) the expansion and interconnection of antistatist struggles; and (4) the cultivation of community and coalition among outsider scholar activists, social justice lawyers, law students, and others. LatCrit’s membership includes primarily academics and advocates based in the United States, and LatCrit’s theory seeks to elucidate intra-and inter-group diversities across multiple identity axes, including

those based on perspective and discipline, to ensure that African American, Asian American, Latina/o, Native American, Feminist, Queer and other OutCrit subjectivities are considered under the law. Hence, LatCrit's interest in constitutional jurisprudence on marriage equality is central to its mission.

LGBT Bar Association of Maryland

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Bar Association of Maryland is a state association of lawyers, judges and other legal professionals, law students, activists, and affiliate lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgender legal organizations.

LGBT Bar Association of Oregon (“OGALLA”)

OGALLA: The LGBT Bar Association of Oregon is a voluntary organization of legal practitioners – including attorneys, judges, paraprofessionals, and educators – dedicated to the promotion of the fair and just treatment of all people under the law regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, to providing visibility for LGBT persons in the law, to educating the public, the legal profession and the courts about legal issues of particular concern to the LGBT community, to identifying and eliminating the causes and conditions of prejudice in society, and to promoting a spirit of unity, while valuing the diversity of our community.

LGBT & Allied Lawyers of Utah Bar Association

LGBT & Allied Lawyers of Utah is a non-profit organization of associated legal professionals and members of the Utah State Bar, whose mission is to promote education, advocacy, and equality with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Love Honor Cherish (“LHC”)

Love Honor Cherish (“LHC”) is the largest grassroots marriage equality organization in Southern California. Founded in May 2008 to defend the California Supreme Court’s decision *In re Marriage Cases*, 43 Cal. 4th 757 (2008), LHC has strategically moved marriage equality forward since its inception. In 2010 and 2012, LHC launched efforts to gather signatures to put repeal of Proposition 8 on the ballot in California due to its unwavering dedication to restore marriage equality in California as soon as possible. While those efforts were unsuccessful due to the prohibitive cost of funding a signature gathering campaign, LHC’s volunteers had more than one million conversations about the importance of marriage equality with California voters. LHC continues to advance marriage equality through public education, community empowerment and outreach in collaboration its coalition partners.

Marriage Equality USA

Marriage Equality USA is a national, not-for profit, volunteer-based organization, comprised of over 40,000 same-sex couples, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, their families, friends, supporters, and allies. The organization leads nonpartisan, community-based educational efforts to secure the freedom to marry for all loving, committed couples without regard to sexual orientation or gender identity and to have those marriages fully recognized by the federal government.

Minnesota Lavender Bar Association (“MLBA”)

The Minnesota Lavender Bar Association (MLBA) is a voluntary professional association of LGBT attorneys and allies, promoting fairness and equality for the LGBT community within the legal industry and for the Minnesota community. The MLBA envisions a Minnesota where LGBT attorneys, clients, and community members are treated equally and without discrimination. The MLBA’s mission is to promote equality and justice in the legal profession and the LGBT community in Minnesota.

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (“NAPABA”)

The National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (“NAPABA”) is the national association of Asian Pacific American attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students. NAPABA represents the interests of over 40,000

attorneys and 62 local Asian Pacific American bar associations, who work variously in solo practices, large firms, corporations, legal services organizations, non-profit organizations, law schools, and government agencies. Since its inception in 1988, NAPABA has been at the forefront of national and local activities in the areas of civil rights. Equal access to the fundamental right to marry is one such right which Asian Pacific Americans were long denied through anti-miscegenation laws, and NAPABA joins amici to continue the defense of equal access to the fundamental right to marry.

New Mexico Lesbian and Gay Lawyers Association (“NMLGLA”)

The New Mexico Lesbian and Gay Lawyers Association (“NMLGLA”), formed in 1995, is a non-profit, voluntary bar organization committed to promoting and protecting the interests of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lawyers and to achieving their full participation in all rights, privileges and benefits of the legal profession. The NMLGLA also strives to promote the efficient administration of justice and the constant improvement of the law, especially as it relates to lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender individuals.

Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia, Inc.

Stonewall Bar Association of Georgia, Inc. was established in 1995 as a coalition of attorneys, judges, law students, paralegals, and other legal

professionals to utilize their expertise to support the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and oppose discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. A voluntary bar association, consisting of almost 300 dues-paying members, SBA publishes an on-line directory of attorneys who are eager to serve gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender clients. The organization also publishes a monthly newsletter that is emailed to approximately 800 legal professionals, provides scholarships to law students, conducts continuing education for attorneys, and provides opportunities for networking with judges and other legal professionals. SBA has worked with other organizations to file amicus briefs in cases that impact our community in Georgia. Such briefs have been submitted in cases that overturned Georgia's sodomy law and secured the rights of local governments and private corporations to offer domestic partnership benefits to company employees and their life partners.

Stonewall Law Association of Greater Houston ("SLAGH")

Stonewall Law Association of Greater Houston is a voluntary professional association of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender attorneys, judges, paralegals, law students and allies who provide a LGBT presence within the greater Houston legal community. SLAGH encourages the recognition of civil and human rights, promotes sensitivity to legal issues faced by LGBT community and those living with HIV, assures the fair and just treatment of members of the LGBT

community, provides opportunities for LGBT attorneys, judges, law students and their allies to interact in a professional setting, builds alliances with other minority bar associations and legal organizations, and enhances the practice and professional expertise of lawyers who serve or are members of the LGBT community.

University of Virginia Lambda Law Alliance

Lambda Law Alliance provides an academically and socially supportive network for members of sexual minorities and their allies enrolled at the University of Virginia School of Law. Lambda also works to heighten awareness, in the law school and throughout the broader university community, about legal issues relevant to sexual minorities. Lambda is dedicated to advancing equal civil rights for all sexual minorities and securing an end to marriage discrimination against same-sex couples.