

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Enshrine Marriage Equality into State Law

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**TRENTON** – Governor Murphy today signed into law S3416, which codifies marriage equality in New Jersey law by providing that all laws concerning marriage and civil union are to be read with gender neutral intent. Marriage equality currently exists in New Jersey based on state and federal Court decisions. This new law demonstrates the Governor and Legislature's commitment to protecting marriage equality by codifying it into New Jersey law.

"Despite the progress we have made as a country, there is still much work to be done to protect the LGBTQ+ community from intolerance and injustice. New Jersey is stronger and fairer when every member of our LGBTQ+ family is valued and given equal protection under the law," **said Governor Murphy**. "I am honored to sign legislation that represents our New Jersey values and codifies marriage equality into state law."

Primary sponsors of the bill include Senators Steve Sweeney, Loretta Weinberg, and Vin Gopal, and Assemblymembers Valerie Vainieri Huttie, Mila M. Jasey, Annette Quijano, Andrew Zwicker, and Joann Downey.

"This is about acting to ensure equal treatment and civil rights for all New Jerseyans, including same-sex couples," **said Senate President Steve Sweeney**. "Marriage equality respects the rights of loving couples who deserve to be treated equally. The courts have ruled that same-sex marriages are a fundamental right, but we want to put it into statute to protect against any backtracking by the U. S. Supreme Court. It is the right thing to do."

"Devoted same-sex couples all across New Jersey are raising families as contributing members of their communities," **said Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg**. "We fought to correct the injustice that denied these rights for too many loving couples for far too long. We don't want to see those rights lost to an arch-conservative agenda of recent Supreme Court appointees."

"Basic equal rights should not be denied to any class of citizen, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation," **said Senator Vin Gopal**. "The law must protect all civil rights and continue to honor the union between two people who love each other. We need to make these rights more secure by writing them into law."

"In 2012, I was proud to be a prime sponsor of New Jersey's Marriage Equality Act. Following Governor Christie's veto, advocates continued the fight to the New Jersey Supreme Court, where they were finally successful in legalizing same-sex marriage," **said Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttie**. "I am proud to once again have led the charge to ensure that the rights of the LGBTQ community are safeguarded."

"As Justice Kennedy so eloquently observed in Obergefell, 'No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than they once were,'" **said Assemblywoman Mila Jasey**. "Today, we recommit to guaranteeing that one of 'civilization's oldest institutions' is forever enshrined in statute for all who desire to embark upon the commitment above all others."

"Today we take action with this new law in order to preserve marriage equality in New Jersey," **said Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. "We remain committed to our friends in the Garden State's LGBTQ community and do all we can to ensure same-sex couples have equal rights under the law which includes marriage."

"In 2013, I was ecstatic and grateful that the Court ruled that New Jersey must recognize same-sex marriage," **said Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker**. "Today, I am proud to stand in solidarity with everyone who fought the good fight for a right that couples should have always had: the right for someone to marry who they love. It is important for State law to forever enshrine the legality of marriage equality."

"This new law is just one more step to show we continue to stand strong against discrimination and prejudice, and we seek to create a New Jersey that is inclusive and unified for all people," **said Assemblywoman Joann Downey**.

This legislation brings New Jersey statutory law into conformance with the 2013 decision in Garden State Equality v. Dow as well as the 2015 United Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, which held that same-sex marriage is a fundamental right and that all states are required to allow same-sex couples to marry. Enacting S3416 into law ensures that the right to same-sex marriage will continue to exist in New Jersey even if these state and federal court precedents were to be overturned.

"How the world has changed since last time the legislature passed marriage equality in 2012. This time we have a Governor who is a champion of civil and human rights second to none," **said Steven Goldstein, founder of Garden State Equality**. "I am also thrilled this new statute marks the final law steered to passage by our equality legend Senator Loretta Weinberg. What a fitting, crowning legacy."

"Securing marriage equality in New Jersey for committed same-sex couples and their families has literally been a labor of love at Garden State Equality for nearly two decades," **said Thomas Prol, a founding and current Garden State Equality executive committee member and co-author of the legislation**. "We are grateful to the Governor and the legislative leadership for helping us protect these vital rights from the national onslaught being leveled against the LGBTQ community every day. Our community can now sleep tight knowing that their relationships are cemented in New Jersey's statutory law books."

"Twelve years ago, the Senate failed to pass marriage equality and then Senate President Dick Codey predicted that one day they would all look back and say, 'what were we thinking?' As one of the first couples to be married when marriage equality was established, our gratitude goes to all who saw this as a civil rights issue then and continued the fight to bring us to this day, especially Senators Loretta Weinberg and Raymond Lesniak," **said Marsha Shapiro and Louise Walpin**. "Special thanks to Governor Phil Murphy for keeping his promise to move New Jersey forward and codifying the right for all New Jerseyans to marry the one they love into law."

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