



Press Release

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ACLU Sues for Freedom to Marry in Montana

Four loving, committed same-sex couples challenge MT marriage amendment in federal court

HELENA, MT — Angie and Tonya Rolando share a last name, but they are not married. The Great Falls couple is one of four loving, committed same-sex couples the ACLU is representing as they sue Montana in federal court today for the right to get married or to have their marriages from other states legally recognized in Montana.

"My every day is her," says Angie Rolando of her partner Tonya. "I can't think of a part of my life without her connected to it."

Across the country, federal courts are ruling there are no sound reasons to deny same-sex couples the freedom to marry. At the same time, public support for marriage equality is growing.

"It isn't the government's place to stand in the way of someone's happiness," says ACLU of Montana Legal Director Jim Taylor. "It's the government's place to provide equal protection under the law. Excluding same-sex couples from marriage is a clear violation of our nation's guarantee of equal protection. Every couple should have the freedom to marry and to have the legal protections to care for one another that marriage provides."

Plaintiffs in the case are Angie and Tonya Rolando of Great Falls, Shauna and Nicole Goubeaux of Billings, Ben Milano and Chase Weinhandl of Bozeman and Sue Hawthorne and Adel Johnson of Helena.

"We want Aden to grow up knowing that we are a family like any other family," says Shauna Goubeaux of her and wife Nicole's 1 year-old son. The two married in Iowa, but that marriage is not recognized in Montana. "Marriage is part of being a family. By being plaintiffs in this case we are showing him his mommies will stand up for what is right and stand up for him."

"An amazing change has taken place over the past few years as more Americans embrace the idea that same-sex couples should have the freedom to marry," says Elizabeth Gill, staff attorney with the ACLU Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Project. "It's time for Montana to join the march toward equality for all loving and committed couples across the country."

In addition to Taylor and Gill, the couples are represented by Ben Alke and James Goetz of Goetz, Gallik & Baldwin P.C.; and Stuart Plunkett, Ruth Borenstein, Ariel Ruiz, and Emily Regier of the law firm Morrison & Foerster LLP.

Additional information about the case can be found at www.aclumontana.org