

Alternatives to Marriage Update

Quarterly Newsletter of the Alternatives to Marriage Project

Autumn 2006



Executive Director Nicky Grist leads a workshop about spreading AtMP's message.

"FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR"

THIS issue is all about advocacy and action. Unmarried people don't vote or participate in civic debates as much as married people do, and we aim to change that. Because this is so important, for the first time we're sending this *Update* to every person in our national membership base!

Among the many public policy topics affecting unmarried people, this issue of *Update* addresses

- Health insurance policies that dispense access to care based on marital status
- Political schemes that embed marital status discrimination into state constitutions
- Housing policies that exclude unmarried families from local communities
- Government-funded programs that push low-income people to get married
- AtMP's position on ending marital status discrimination in immigration

AtMP's policy analysis starts with ideas from interns, volunteers and members of our board of directors – if you're good at research and excited about social change, contact me at atmp@unmarried.org.

This issue introduces a new feature: **"WHAT YOU CAN DO."** This feature will also appear on our website. Public policy is the fastest-growing section of www.unmarried.org – if you haven't visited lately, check it out!

I hope our newsletter and website will inspire you not only to act, but also to tell us about your actions. Do our suggestions work? What future topics should we address? We look forward to learning from you.

Meet an AtMP Board Member

MARTHA EHRENFELD

I had scheduled a meeting with my family's lawyer to include my girlfriend in my will. I was nervous. What would he think? Had he ever written a will that included a same sex partner? I wanted to come prepared and sound intelligent. I surfed the web and came across AtMP's website which offered several useful books for sale. I called up right away and got a helpful voice at the end that was willing to pack up the book right away. (Even though I was worried about this meeting, I still had procrastinated!) That helpful voice was Dorian, one of the co-founders of AtMP.

As a kind of lesbian that brings a U-haul on the second date, I am very excited about the possibility of marriage equality. Yet even if one day I can walk down the aisle in any state and say, "I do," I want to make sure that everyone's desire to couple is legally protected. In the school community where I teach, I know there are many different types of

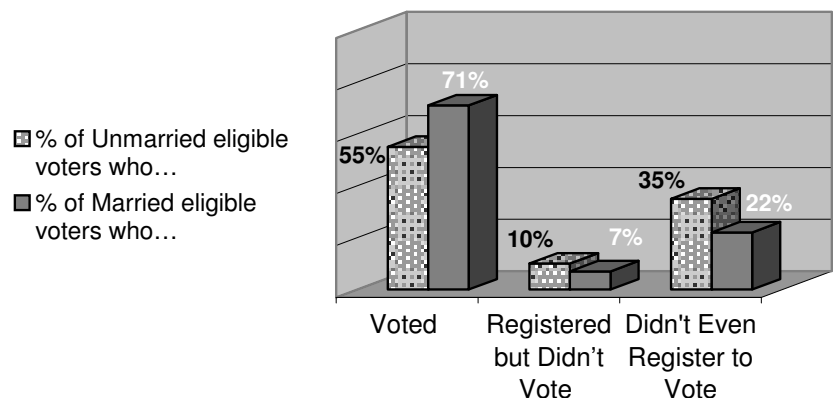


families. Why should the state feel a need define and in many instances deny the rights of many successful and loving family units? I truly admire AtMP's work to keep the discussion going on why the government is in the marriage business at all.

I have enjoyed my term on the AtMP board. The conversations are unique. We bring up issues that even my most lefty San Francisco friends don't talk about! I hope you, as a subscriber to AtMP, feel part of the conversation.

AtMP's board of directors is ready to grow! If you are passionate about improving conditions for all unmarried people... if you can spare at least one hour per week... if you are good at "virtual" team work (a mix of independent efforts, 2-way conversations, and group discussion via email and phone) then we encourage you to apply! You can read more and download an application at www.unmarried.org/boardinfo.html

Who Voted in the 2004 General Election?



Election Day is Tuesday November 7th! Are you registered to vote? Do you know the location and hours of your polling place? Do you know where the candidates stand on marital status discrimination in housing, access to health insurance, government funding for marriage promotion, exclusionary constitutional amendments, and immigration of unmarried families? You have the right to ask!

OPINION

Heath Care and Marital Status

RYAN McKELVEY

WHAT does marital status have to do with health care? Many unmarried individuals in a relationship cannot receive health care benefits through a partner's plan because of their marital status, even with a rise of coverage available due to recognition of domestic partnerships. People in heterosexual and homosexual coupled relationships are often denied access to their partner's health care benefits if they are not married. When people are unmarried for either personal, political, or legal reasons, they may suffer because of it. Others are financially coerced into marriage in order to gain access to benefits such as health insurance. A part of the answer to America's health insurance woes is to delink marital status – and therefore employment – from access to health care.

According to the National Coalition on Health Care (NCHC), 46 million Americans were without health insurance in 2004 and the percentage of people with employment based health insurance has dropped from 70% in 1987 to 59.8% in 2004. This is the lowest level of employment based insurance coverage in more than a decade. Even if companies offer health care benefits, employees cannot always afford to contribute to coverage for themselves and additional premiums for families. Employee's contributions to health insurance coverage increased 143% between 2000 and 2005.

AtMP often hears about health care issues from people who visit our website. Here are two common examples of such dilemmas. Linda, from Michigan, writes about the limitations of domestic partnership coverage in her state:

"Health insurance [and] life insurance is available through my work for same sex partners but not different sex part-

ners. I also have family sick time which does not include my partner."

On the issue of marrying in order to get health insurance coverage, Tasia explains:

"I got married to my business and life partner Brian on March 14th. I did it for purely financial reasons - Dental and Health Insurance! Brian and I went to the dentist today. Do you have any idea how impossible it is to get Dental Insurance when you are self-employed? I have not told my family we are married. We have not told his family. Strictly speaking, our getting that piece of paper made no difference in our relationship, what so ever."

The recognition of domestic partnerships in some regions of the country and by some businesses currently functions as a stop-gap measure in the absence of universal health care, providing the extension of benefits for many people. Opponents of domestic partnerships claim that providing benefits to unmarried couples is immoral and costly. Earlier this year, the state-sponsored University of Louisville in Kentucky began offering health insurance for domestic partners in order to improve their benefits package and attract new talent. Professor of Engineering Gina Bertocci is an example of a new faculty member recruited to Louisville with the understanding that she would be able to cover her partner under her health insurance plan. Senator Richard Roeding and the Family Foundation of Kentucky objected to the expanded coverage. Senator Roeding explained, "I don't want to entice any of those people into our state. Those are the wrong kind of people." Dave Edmunds, a policy analyst for the Family Foundation of Kentucky, characterized the program

as a rejection of traditional marriage and that taxpayers should hold lawmakers accountable for the university's decision to fund the program. In response, University Trustee Bill Stone argued: "From an economic development position this does send [a message] to the rest of the country that this is an enlightened institution."

Issues of taxation and so-called family values are intertwined around objections to extending benefits to domestic partners. While opponents of domestic partnership claim that it places an improper burden on taxpayers, that's factually inaccurate. Not only would extending benefits to domestic partners cost about the same as extending benefits to married couples, it could actually end up saving taxpayers money. If domestic partners are able to rely on each other more, it would reduce current reliance on state and federal assistance. Studies have projected that the California would save an estimated \$8.1 to \$10.6 million each year by enacting the most comprehensive domestic partner law in the nation. In New Jersey, which passed a new domestic partner law in 2004, the savings were projected even higher – more than \$61 million each year. Additionally, under current federal law, a domestic partner's health insurance premium is taxed as part of the employee's income. Married couples, not subject to such a tax, receive special treatment from the federal government in this regard.

In *Benitez vs. North Coast Women's Care Medical Group*, the plaintiff sued her doctors for refusing to continue with infertility treatment because she was a lesbian. The doctors claim their refusal was based on Benitez's unmarried status, not because she's a lesbian, and that they have a right to make this decision on religious grounds. The ruling has twice gone in favor of the doctors and is currently under review of the Supreme Court of California. Joel Ginsberg, Executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association, said, "Health care providers in California need to know that discriminating based on sexual orientation or marital status, even if for religious reasons, is unethical and illegal."

More organizations working on health care reform should follow Ginsberg's example and, in their advocacy, point to marital status discrimination as a significant factor in health care debates. The

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Many health care reform efforts are conducted as state-based campaigns. If you know of an organization that does good work, but that could be better at incorporating marital status issues into their work, let us know. Write to us at: atmp@unmarried.org



"...Until universal health care exists." This design (drawn for AtMP by New Yorker cartoonist Paul Karasik) is available on t-shirts & mugs at AtMP's online store: www.cafepress.com/atmp

recognition of domestic partnerships has been an important step in providing access to health insurance many people who would currently be without coverage. Ultimately, a fairer strategy that would support freedom and diversity would be a state-sponsored health care system that does not deliver health insurance through employment, but to all people regardless of family status.

Ryan McKelvey attends Hunter College where he studies Political Science. This summer he researched unmarried people's access to health insurance, under the guidance of AtMP board member Jennifer Gaboury.

Meet an AtMP Intern

MICHELE HIRSCH

WHEN I was looking for a place to work after graduating college, AtMP's mission statement struck me as unmatched by anything I'd previously seen. I started my internship just a week after graduation - thrilled to find 'real' world people committed to issues vastly important and yet, too often, overlooked.

As supporters know, AtMP is a rather inimitable organization—and that goes for its internal structure as well. Working here I had the opportunity to watch and participate in behind-the-scenes efforts, and was pleasantly surprised by how truly active all members are. Whereas some organizations' boards become a remote entity that signs off on others' work, AtMP's board members each play a crucial role in actually doing what gets done, then shaping what comes next. AtMP'ers link ideological support and concrete action; they link shared commitment and cohesive effort. Thanks to these links, I learned more about the inner-workings of a nonprofit and the nexus of helpful information generated when experts pool ideas than I have in any prior position.

My own projects focused on boosting our understanding, evaluation, and review of federal marriage promotion, much of which is funded by the welfare

reauthorization passed in February of this year. From a family-diversity and unmarried-people perspective, I researched and evaluated the overarching problems of government-sponsored marriage promotion—and the additional concerns that arise when marriage is billed as a fix for widespread poverty.

Through attempting to comprehensively study the masses of funding opportunities, grant awards, and subsequent programs that stem from welfare law, I came to recognize the far-reaching effects of the so-called Healthy Marriage Initiative. The difficulty of navigating all the ways in which federal money is used to promote marriage lies in the fact that a slew of efforts has spiraled out of one basic plan. That marriage promotion rhetoric has seeped into nearly all of the facets of the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Children and Families - including programs concerning refugees, child support enforcement, Native Americans, and adoption - demonstrates the top-down push for marriage as our number one 'answer.' While not all marriage promoters see weddings as a panacea for the nation's copious structural problems, most of the language employed in the marriage arena does convey an almost absurd level of not only 'moral' but social, political, and economic urgency. And although some of the people with whom I corresponded are rather rational



in their outlook, others in the movement depict marriage as if it were the one-and-only, near-divine approach to ending poverty, crime, and any other plight of the American people. I'm happy to have helped work toward a less narrow concept of family and to have contributed to discourse that influences not only the unmarried but low-income populations in general.

In addition to learning about federal marriage promotion, I was also glad to learn of the different types of reasons supporters sought out and now feel validated by AtMP. I was at first surprised by the variety of people who feel a connection to what we advocate, and continue to be impressed by the wide range of backgrounds to which AtMP appeals. Working at AtMP has been great! I plan on staying very connected long after this internship is through.

OPINION

Housing Laws and the Meaning of Household

KATHLEEN MCDONOUGH

COMMUNITY housing laws provide much needed safeguards against hazardous or unsanitary living conditions, and we might assume that such regulations are neutrally enforced to maintain a living standard that is secure and equitable for all community members. What is sometimes overlooked but worthy of our attention is the impact of such regulations in defining households and families.

The Federal Fair Housing Act (FFHA) states: "It is the policy of the United States to provide, within constitutional limitations, for fair housing throughout the United States." Under the FFHA it is illegal to refuse to rent or sell housing, deny the availability of housing, block access to housing through renters or brokers, establish different terms or conditions for sale or rental of housing, or threaten, coerce or otherwise intimidate an individual in pursuing their right to fair housing based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex or disability.

Despite the expansion of protected statuses under the FFHA's 1988 updates, there is currently no federal protection against housing discrimination based on marital status. While many states have added such protections to their human rights and/or housing codes, thousands of municipalities nationwide presently have total discretion regarding housing discrimination based on marital status. The federal marriage exception has created a vacuum in which unjust housing practices disproportionately affect sin-

HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AND ATMP'S HISTORY:

When Dorian Solot and Marshall Miller were looking for an apartment in the Boston area, they inquired about a listing only to have the landlord make it clear that he would not rent to unmarried couples. They later found that the landlord's inquiry into their marital status was illegal. When they looked for groups working on this issue, they didn't find any. This was one of the experiences that galvanized them to create AtMP in 1998.

gles and families whose relationships exist outside of “blood, marriage or adoption.”

Municipal zoning ordinances can often encode discriminatory housing practices and moral judgments about the validity of certain families and household arrangements in the name of “over crowding” and occupancy standards. Often, these ordinances neglect to consider the actual square footage of a residence, and instead focus on the number of “unrelated” individuals who occupy a single family dwelling. Such discriminatory practices made headlines this summer in Black Jack, MO, when a family of five was denied an occupancy permit for a two story, five bedroom home because Olivia Shelltrack and Fondray Loving were not legally married. Under the threat of a lawsuit brought by the ACLU on behalf of the couple, the Black Jack city council eventually amended its rules to allow unmarried partners to live together.

Municipal zoning ordinances are not the only means by which unmarried couples are left vulnerable in housing transactions. Adding marital status to the list of protected statuses under the FFHA would prevent landlords from citing claims of religious liberty to deny housing to unmarried couples, and could penetrate the wall of privacy surrounding co-op board rejections of unmarried couples.

Even in cases where members of a

household are related by blood, housing codes are increasingly being amended to narrow the definition of a family to exclude extended relationships, including aunts, uncles, grandparents, nephews and nieces. Housing ordinances such as these mask community prejudices with the language of over crowding and “single family” occupancy. Insidious racist encoding violates federal protections against race and national origin discrimination and promotes dangerously normative standards of who counts as a family and who does not. Manassas, VA received national attention this year for an ordinance prohibiting aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and great-grandparents from living together as a family, unambiguously targeting Latino families in the community. The ordinance was later suspended under threat of a lawsuit brought once again by the ACLU.

Without federal protection for household diversity, municipal housing ordinances are often used to discourage neighborhood diversity, leaving singles and families vulnerable to the whims of their community leaders. We must insist housing codes reflect neutral standards of sanitation and safety without legally defining who we care for and how we do so. It is time for the federal government to support and protect household and family diversity, because it is the function of housing laws to reflect and accommodate changing housing needs, not sculpt and resist our evolving relationships.

Kathleen (Katie) McDonough attends Hunter College where she studies Political Science. This summer she researched marital status discrimination in housing, under the guidance of AtMP board member Jennifer Gaboury.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

DO you live in a municipality that forbids unmarried folks from living together? Find out! Here are some places to start:

- <http://www.municode.com>: Search your city at this comprehensive website of municipal codes.

- <http://www.fairhousing.com>: Click “Get Help Near You” for a partial list of private and government Fair Housing agencies in or around your community.

You can also look to your local library for information about your city government and local representatives. Put in a call and ask who you can speak with about housing codes in your community! If you find restrictions on unmarried cohabitation where you live, please let us know. Email us at atmp@unmarried.org

Meet an AtMP Intern

RICHARD SEMEGRAM

ACROSS the country, marriage continues to be a hot political issue. Even though the Federal Marriage Amendment was defeated, almost every state has legislated or is working on some form of law concerning same-sex marriage and the exclusivity of marital benefits. As an intern with AtMP this summer, I delved into this issue and would like to share some of my findings.

My research this summer helped to answer the question: why does same-sex marriage matter for AtMP? I see two reasons that every AtMP supporter should care. First, writing marriage discrimination into law (or worse, a constitutional amendment) pushes all forms of non-marital relationships further from legal and societal acceptance. A ban on same-sex marriage is a step away from the objectives of AtMP. Second, marriage discrimination laws and amendments hurt all unmarried people by limiting many rights to married couples only.

In the first month of my internship, I researched the opposition – those who would accord legal and social status only to government-certified man/woman relationships. They are steadily building academic arguments to support their opinions. Their political operation is well organized and plays an active role in promoting marriage discrimination legislation. Specifically, organizations such as The Family Institute and Focus on the Family have established branches in almost all of the states where action is occurring. All this together might seem discouraging for AtMP supporters.

I am optimistic because the same-sex marriage movement is vibrant and impressive. An increasing amount of business, including many Fortune 500s, have added domestic partner benefits, and by extension are increasingly in support of same-sex marriage where legal as a good business practice. National political organizations are heavily mobilized in the states against the upcoming referenda to ban same-sex marriage, and state-wide groups are being very successful at mobilizing voters on the issue as well. Moreover and most importantly, public opinion is noticeably shifting in the direction of support for same-sex marriage. In the past two years since states last faced referenda on same-sex marriage, opinions have shifted greatly towards tolerance and acceptance of same-sex unions.

At least eight states will vote on marriage discrimination amendments this year. These amendments prohibit same-



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This issue of the AtMP Update is sponsored by Muses Legal Products, creators of the Legal Guide to Living Together software which provides over 150 documents designed to better legally and financially protect unmarried couples in common situations. To purchase a copy, visit www.musesproducts.com or call 800-234-1162.



sex marriage, and most also deny state or local recognition of domestic partnerships and other non-marital relationships. They will affect unmarried people in myriad ways.

After the research phase of my summer internship, I recruited volunteers in three of these states and drafted weekly action steps that the volunteers can take to contribute to the defeat of these amendments. Over 35 AtMP members signed up as activists.

Based on the research and action planning I did this summer, I am very optimistic about the outcome of these elections. While none of the previous amendments have been defeated, this could definitely be the year to make it happen. So keep positive, get involved with AtMP or a local organization, and vote on November 7, 2006.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

WANT to read more about marriage discrimination amendments? Visit our website http://www.unmarried.org/stop_06_amendments/index.php. Do you live in Arizona, Wisconsin or Virginia? Do you know voters in those states? You can join a dedicated email group to receive weekly action ideas. Recent ideas include sending postcards to voters and writing letters to newspaper editors. Go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/> and type ATMP in the search field.

Surprise!

You Can Vote Twice for Unmarried Rights!

YOU might be surprised to receive this edition of Update on paper. Typically only 1 in 8 of our subscribers receives paper Updates. But this issue covers public policy topics that are so important and so timely that we want to be sure every subscriber sees it. Email subscribers often miss an issue of Update because their mailboxes are full, or their software mistakes Update for spam, or they don't have time to click through to the website and read the full articles (the email version contains mostly headlines and summaries). We'd like to keep sending paper Updates to every member of AtMP (except those who really prefer email), but we don't know if we can afford it. AtMP has a big vision and a tiny budget. This newsletter is an experiment – your response will be the proof. Statistics say unmarried people don't vote – well here's your chance to vote

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

TO keep costs under control, we haven't included a return envelope. So please, grab an envelope & a stamp, and send your donation to AtMP, PO Box 320151, Brooklyn NY 11232. Even easier, click on www.unmarried.org/donate.html to set up automated monthly or quarterly credit card payments – today!

twice! Cast your ballot on Election Day, and make a tax-deductible contribution to AtMP. Your donation will enable us to keep publishing the reality, and the validity, of being single, being in an unmarried relationship, being in a non-traditional family.



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NEWS

LGBT Leaders Looking Beyond Marriage

AtMP's founders, board members and Executive Director were all delighted to sign on to *Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision*. This public statement was created by 18 concerned individuals and joined by over 1,200 more since its release on July 26, 2006. AtMP welcomes *Beyond Marriage* because it parallels AtMP's *Affirmation of Family Diversity* (released in June 2000) in so many ways, and because it draws new people into the debate about the primacy of marriage. Here are just a few of the very powerful lines one can find in the full statement:

- We, the undersigned – lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and allied activists, scholars, educators, writers, artists, lawyers, journalists, and community organizers – seek to offer friends and colleagues everywhere a new vision for securing governmental and private institutional recognition of diverse kinds of partnerships, households, kinship relationships and families. In so doing, we hope to move beyond the narrow confines of marriage politics as they exist in the United States today. ...

- The struggle for same-sex marriage rights is only one part of a larger effort to strengthen the security and stability of diverse households and families. LGBT communities have ample reason to recognize that families and relationships know no borders and will never slot narrowly into a single existing template. ...

- To have our government define as “legitimate families” only those households with couples in conjugal relationships does a tremendous disservice to the many other ways in which people actually construct their families, kinship networks, households, and relationships. ...

- Marriage is not the only worthy form of family or relationship, and it should not be legally and economically privileged above all others. While we honor those for whom marriage is the most meaningful personal – for some, also a deeply spiritual – choice, we believe that many other kinds of kinship relationship, households, and families must also be accorded recognition. ...

- LGBT movement strategies must be sufficiently prophetic, visionary, creative, and practical to counter the right's powerful and effective use of “wedge” politics – the strategic marketing of fear and resentment that pits one group against another. ...

- Winning marriage equality in order to access our partners' benefits makes little sense if the benefits that we seek are being shredded. ...

- Rather than focus on same-sex marriage rights as the only strategy, we believe the LGBT movement should reinforce the idea that marriage should be one of many avenues through which households, families, partners, and kinship relationships can gain access to the support of a caring civil society. ...

- We believe LGBT movement strategies must not only democratize recognition and benefits but also speak to the widespread hunger for authentic and just community. ...

- So many of us long for communities in which there is systemic affirmation, valuing, and nurturing of difference, and in which conformity to a narrow and restricting vision is never demanded as the price of admission to caring civil society. ...

- LGBT movement strategies must never secure privilege for some while at the same time foreclosing options for many. Our strategies should expand the current terms of debate, not reinforce them. ...

Read the executive summary or the full statement, view all of the signatories, and sign on at www.beyondmarriage.org.

POLICY POSITION

Immigration and Family Diversity

The Alternatives to Marriage Project takes the position that family is based on a series of emotional and practical ties which may include shared residence, financial interdependence, emotional and physical care for member of the family, and the like. We thus agree that family is an important part, even a ‘building block’, of wider social and community relations. However, it is our position that families in this sense may or may not include or revolve around a married couple. The ability to enter into and protect mutual activities, including the purchase of property, shar-

ing of income, provision of health care, etc., should be protected regardless of marital status.

Immigration law in many countries, including the United States of America, gives priority to family reunification, enabling close family members (and often more distant family members) a route to immigration based on their family relationship with an existing citizen or resident. Although marriage is often privileged as an indicator of family relationship, it is rarely treated as a guarantor of a genuine family relationship. Married couples, or couples seeking immigration

IMMIGRATION AND ATMP'S LEADERSHIP

One of AtMP's board members, Jo VanEvery, recently moved back to Canada with her unmarried partner and their daughter. Canada has long had a family reunification policy and it was amended in 2002 to be more inclusive of unmarried families. Although Jo and her partner are not married, she was able to sponsor him as a “family class relative” because they are cohabiting partners. They needed to demonstrate that the relationship was genuine. Evidence included the fact that they had a joint bank account, jointly owned a home, and had a daughter together. The

forms also requested information about whether and when members of one partner's family had met the other partner, and photographic evidence of the family relationship. Jo included a photograph taken at her partner's grandparents' 60th wedding anniversary, and photographs of the ceremony they had had when their daughter was born. Two friends swore affidavits about the length of the relationship and its genuineness. As with all sponsorships of family class relatives, Jo had to agree to support her partner for 3 years should he be unable to support himself.

with the intention to marry, are required to provide additional proof of the genuine nature of their relationship through documentation, affidavits sworn by persons known to each individual, photographs, and even interviews with immigration officials. The possibility that a marriage might not be genuine is so well known that “green card” marriages have been the topic of films, books and other popular cultural narratives.

Because the purpose of immigration policy is to be selective about who is admitted to the country, and thus to exclude some people from admittance, immigration procedures will always be onerous. AtMP supports efforts, such as the Uniting American Families Act, to make the process fair to families that, for whatever reason, are not based on a marital relationship. We agree with the authors of the joint report of Human Rights Watch and Immigration Equality, “Family, Unvalued: Discrimination, Denial, and the Fate of Binational Same-Sex Couples under U.S. Law” (<http://hrw.org/reports/2006/us0506/index.htm>) that recognition of non-marital family relationships would likely reduce fraud by removing a major incentive for individuals to enter into sham marriages for purposes of immigration.

Although the report focuses on same-sex couples, many of the issues raised also apply to other unmarried people. In particular, the report provides a summary of the Uniting American Families Act (Appendix A: <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/us0506/9.htm>) and a review of policies in nineteen countries around the world (Appendix B: <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/us0506/10.htm>). What unites these policies is recognition that the valuable aspects of family are long-term commitment, co-residence, financial interdependence, and emotional connections. Most of these retain a privileging of conjugal relationships, though family

reunification provisions in immigration policy usually also contain provisions for non-conjugal family relationships, including the adult children of citizens/residents, the parents of adult citizens/residents, cousins, aunts and uncles, etc.

In an increasingly globalized economy, opportunities to meet potential partners in another country and opportunities (or requirements) to travel to other countries for work are increasing. AtMP takes the position that governments should recognize that their policies are based on the fact that marriage or the intent to marry is not a guarantor of a genuine family relationship and amend their policies to eliminate marital status discrimination in the family reunification provisions. A policy based on existing evidential requirements – proof of co-residence, proof of enduring nature of the relationship, proof that the relationship is known and recognized by others in the community, proof of financial interdependence, etc. – would meet the policy goals of family reunification, reduce immigration fraud, and end discrimination in this important area of policy.

love ≠ marriage

Alternatives to Marriage Project
www.unmarried.org

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LOCAL ACTIVISM

AtMP supporters continue to hold the media and elected officials accountable for fairness towards unmarried people. In July, Josh (KY) wrote to two newspapers and State Senator Richard Roeding to commend a public university for, and decry the Senator’s opposition to, extending health insurance to employees’ same- and different-sex domestic partners. In August, Charlotte (AL) wrote a newspaper to

amplify its editorial point that domestic partnership benefits are not only a gay issue; Jim (MN) wrote to his US Congressperson and Senators about “the unfairness of the overall huge \$30 Billion per year marriage tax subsidy Doyle (NY) phoned nearly 100 AtMP supporters to tell them about the constitutional amendments on their state ballots.

LOOKING FORWARD



Members talk politics and share personal stories at an AtMP event in Boston.

AtMP, live and in person! Our next event will be in Washington DC on Tuesday evening, November 14th. If you will be in the area and would like to attend, send a note to atmp@unmarried.org or call 718-788-1911

Alternatives
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ATMP IN THE MEDIA

Proof that media makes a difference: on seeing Cathy Reuben, AtMP’s pro bono attorney, speak in favor of inclusive domestic partnership benefits on New England Cable TV News, one of her colleagues changed his mind about the marriage movement. “They are getting so narrow-minded now they are losing touch with reality,” he emailed. AtMP often helps reporters by providing data and access to interview subjects to provide good

representation of an unmarried perspective on the news. Thus our point of view usually gets into the story, even when our name does not. This summer AtMP helped reporters and producers at two National Public Radio shows, the Arizona Republic, the Washington Times, and the Daily Journal of Kankakee, IL. AtMP appeared in articles in: Baltimore Sun, Bay Area Reporter, Maine Sun Journal, Quincy Patriot Ledger, and csindy.com.

ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVES TO MARRIAGE PROJECT:

The Alternatives to Marriage Project (AtMP) advocates for equality and fairness for unmarried people, including people who are single, choose not to marry, cannot marry, or live together before marriage. We provide support and information for this fast-growing constituency, fight discrimination on the basis of marital status, and educate the public and policymakers about relevant social and economic issues. We believe that marriage is only one of many

acceptable family forms, and that society should recognize and support healthy relationships in all their diversity. AtMP is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

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- Archives of Update are available at <http://www.unmarried.org/newsletters/>
- AtMP also has an interactive online discussion list, available in regular or digest form. To subscribe, send a message to listserv@lists.netspace.org that says (in the message text) SUB ATMP-TALK

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