

## December 1999

Alternatives to Marriage Update:

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Out and About

ATMP on TV Talk Show

We appeared on The Full Nelson, a new Fox News Channel talk show. The show's topic was "Is Marriage Obsolete?" The ATMP website was mentioned on the air, resulting in hundreds of website visitors and dozens of e-mails and requests for more information about our work.

Feminist Newspaper Prints Our Article

Sojourner, a feminist newspaper based in Boston, asked us to write an article on the National Marriage Project. You can read our article [here](#). It critiqued the research, sexism, and homophobia in the reports released by the National Marriage Project and in the other writings of its directors, David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead.

Our Letter Runs in Salon.Com

The online magazine Salon.com recently dedicated a week in its "Mothers Who Think" section to articles about marriage. One writer talked about why she and her partner have decided not to get married. We wrote a letter to the editor to let readers know our organization exists.

## California Newspaper Quotes Us

An article in the Orange County (California) Register about California's new domestic partner registry quoted ATMP co-founder Dorian Solot. Though in its original format the registry would have included couples regardless of their genders and sexual orientations, the registry that was adopted is limited to same-sex couples and different-sex couples over age 62.

## Unmarried Holiday Gift Ideas

Haven't decided what to buy for that special unmarried person on your holiday shopping list? How about some great reading?

Profits from your book purchase through the ATMP website benefit the work we do. Available books include:

- \* The Living Together Kit: A Legal Guide for Unmarried Couples
- \* A Legal Guide for Lesbian and Gay Couples
- \* The Domestic Partnership Organizing Manual for Employee Benefits

For descriptions of the above books and information about how to purchase them, see our books for sale page.

We also sell books through Powell's, an independent bookstore online:

### Financial Guides:

- \* New Families, New Finances: Money Skills for Today's Nontraditional Families (reviewed at in our September update.) \*
- Financial Fitness for Living Together
- \* Financial Self-Defense: Unmarried Couples: How To Get Protection Denied by Law

### Social/Cultural Books about Marriage and Non-Marriage:

- \* What Is Marriage For? The Strange Social History of Our Most Intimate Institution (reviewed in our July-August update.)
- \* Here Lies My Heart: Essays on Why We Marry, Why We Don't, and What We Find There (reviewed below)
- \* Improvised Woman : Single Women Reinventing Single Life
- \* Marriage Shock: The Transformation of Women into Wives

## Planning Non-Marriage Ceremonies:

- \* The Essential Guide to Gay and Lesbian Weddings (reviewed in our April update.)
- \* Ceremonies of the Heart: Celebrating Lesbian Unions
- \* The Lesbian and Gay Book of Love and Marriage

## Book Buzz

Here Lies My Heart: Essays on Why We Marry, Why We Don't, and What We Find There, edited by Deborah Chasman and Catherine Jhee (1999).

This collection of twenty essays (many by familiar writers like Barbara Ehrenreich, Katha Pollitt, and David Mamet) allocates many more words to the subject of Why We Marry than to the other subject in its title, Why We Don't. One essay is about a same-sex relationship and one is on living alone, but the vast majority describe the writers' (presumably) heterosexual marriages. Monogamy -- and lack thereof -- is a popular topic among the essays, most of which originally appeared in popular magazines.

The essays' quality varies enormously from one to the next, but there are some gems to be found. Kate Jennings' essay "For Better or Worse" describes her decision to get married after having spent years wearing a motorcycle helmet stickered "Better Dead Than Wed." Amy Hempel muses about the benefits of marrying late and carefully in the wonderfully titled "It Takes a Hell of a Man To Replace No Man at All." Mark Doty writes a poignant essay on re-discovering love, guiltily and joyfully, after his partner of a dozen years died of AIDS. Many a writer admits having married without much initial thought ("with the same blithe blindness that sends a bungee jumper off a bridge," says Lynn Darling). Along the life paths of these twenty mostly-married writers are some warm moments, some resigned sadness, and some worthwhile insights for those of us who enjoy pondering the meaning of marriage.

## Recent Workshops

### Roundtable on Language of Unmarried Relationships

At the Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference in Minneapolis, MN, we worked with Kirsten Isgro to present a roundtable called Alternatives to Marriage: Exploring the Rhetoric of Non-Traditional Relationships." A group of academics talked with us about the different words people find to name

their partners and talk about their relationships, and how the lack of easy language challenges the relationships.

#### Caucus at National LGBT Activists' Conference

We worked with Jeremy Pittman to organize a caucus at Creating Change, the annual conference of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, held this year in Oakland, CA. The group discussed the diversity of opinions about marriage in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities. Most people who attended seemed to agree that although they believed same-sex couples should have the right to marry, there was a need for more attention and discussion of relationships where marriage is not the goal.

#### Hearty Thank Yous

#### A Great Idea for People Planning Ceremonies

Many thanks to Amy Glesius and Roger Buelow, who are planning a ceremony and celebration without a legal marriage, and listed donations to ATMP in their gift registry! Thanks, Amy and Roger, for listing our organization as a cause you believe in.

#### It Keeps Us Going

Many of you gave generously in response to our recent request for support to make our work possible. Thank you to Jennifer Barry, Tree Bressen, Alexandra Chasin, Tom Coleman and Michael Vasquez, Janna Cordeiro, Chris Fariello, Jane Fronek, Dave Goss and Ulla Figwer, Karl Heinemann, Tom Limoncelli, Maureen Marovitch, Suzanne Miller, Daniel Jay Ortiz, Jeff Patterson, Susan Rooney, Amber Settle, Barbara Solot, Goldie and Les Solot, Wil Taylor, Joan Walsh, and other donors who wish to remain anonymous.

If you'd like to help us create a society in which diverse relationships are supported and valued, we'd appreciate your support. Make out your check to ATMP and mail it to P.O. Box 991010, Boston, MA 02199. Thank you!

#### Sizzling Statistics

#### Canadians Marrying Later, Less Often

According to Statistics Canada, the average Canadian bride is now 30.9, and the average Canadian groom is 33.5. Robert Glossop, director of the Vanier Institute of the Family, pointed out that although people are getting married later, they're not waiting longer to form relationships.

Since common-law (domestic partner) relationships are widely accepted and legally supported in Canada, he said, people have less reason to rush into marriage. The number of marriage ceremonies conducted in Canada in 1997 was down 2% from the previous year, and down 24% from the all-time high in 1974.

### Pregnant Moms Less Likely To Get Married

In the early 1990s, the majority of first babies born to women under 30 were conceived by unmarried couples. Unlike in decades past, when most pregnant unmarried women quickly got married, in the '90s 41% of those babies were born to still-unmarried parents. A recent Census report found that white women and college graduates were more likely to marry before their babies were born, while black and Hispanic women were less likely to marry. Of the babies born to women who were legally "single," 41% were part of cohabiting couples.

### 19-Country Poll Finds Marriage Fundamental

The Catholic News Service EWTN reported on a new international poll, which found that 74 percent of respondents believe that "a family created through lawful marriage is the fundamental unit of society." 79 percent of the respondents said that "all things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father."

### Marriage Rates Dropping in Europe

According to the Council of Europe's annual demographic report, the number of marriages continues to fall in Europe except in France, Germany, Iceland and Portugal. At the same time, the number of divorces is rising, with the annual number of divorces in Northern Europe being almost half the annual number of marriages. The number of children born to unmarried parents is also rising. Two-thirds of births in Iceland are to unmarried parents, 50% in Denmark, 40% in France, 1 birth in 11 in Italy and Switzerland, and 1 birth in 30 in Greece.

### Study Finds "Average" American Household Is Unmarried

A study released by researchers at the University of Chicago found that 32% of all American households are composed of unmarried people with no children. Only 26% of households fit the "traditional" mold of a married couple with children. The number of unmarried households reported in the study includes cohabiting couples, unmarried people who live with a roommate(s), and unmarried people living alone.

### British Group Recommends Less Focus on Marriage as Key for Kids

A poll by Britain's National Family and Parenting Institute found that only one in five people believe marriage is the key to raising happy children in the "millennial family." The Institute concluded it must focus

more on supporting families and less on "converting" people to the importance of marriage.

#### Tidbits

#### End to Marriage Suggested at UN Conference

At a United Nations-sponsored conference of the International Conference of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) in October, Sheelagh Conway of Hancuk University Seoul, Korea urged that "marriage be abolished."

#### British Futurists Predict Less Marriage

The Future Foundation, a think tank based in London, released a report predicting that children born in the first decade of the new millennium will marry less and have a series of monogamous relationships in their lifetimes.

#### Cohabiting Couples Are Growing Percentage of All Couples

Janice Shaw Crouse, Senior Fellow at the Beverly LaHaye Institute, said at a policy forum on "Marriage in the New Millennium," that in 1960 there were 90 married couples for every cohabiting unmarried couple (presumably, she is counting only different-sex couples). If present trends continue, she says, by 2010 there will be only seven married couples for every cohabiting couple.

#### Births to Unmarried Parents Counted with Tragedies

The National Center for Health Statistics releases an annual report about health-related trends. A recent report talked about positive trends like a decrease in deaths from violent crimes and homicides, a decline in AIDS deaths, and longer life expectancy. However, it listed the increase in "nonmarital childbearing" as bad news, along with an increase in low birthweight babies and no change in the infant mortality rate. We certainly agree that giving birth without the support or resources one needs to be a good parent is a cause for concern, but that's not automatically the same thing as being an unmarried parent.

#### Focus on Family President Warns Marriage May Be Dying

At a conference of the Pennsylvania Family Institute, James Dobson, president of Focus on the Family, said that the word "marriage" has become politically incorrect. He said marriage was the centerpiece of the family and spoke against the legalization of same-sex marriage: "If we lose this battle over marriage, the family is living on borrowed time." He also said

that given the increase in cohabitation, marriage may be dying.

## News From Around the World

### Britain Considers Benefits Based on Dependency, Not Sexual Orientation

The British Law Commission recommended that same-sex couples, godchildren, friends, and other dependents should be eligible to claim damages after a breadwinner is killed in an accident. Currently only married and different-sex cohabiting couples and parents (of minors) are eligible to receive bereavement damages in England and Wales.

### French Unmarried Rights Law Found Constitutional

France's Constitutional Council approved the country's recently-passed Civil Solidarity Pact (PACS), which will give same-sex and different-sex unmarried couples legal rights similar to married couples. Conservative lawmakers had asked the 9-member constitutional watchdog group to decide whether the law violated the constitution, in which case it would have been void.

### Italian Village Considers Tax on Unmarried People

The mayor of the village of Vastogirardi is concerned about the number of adults in the village who are unmarried and have no children -- 70 people in a town of 823 -- and has threatened to impose a special tax on them. The town's population has shrunk considerably in recent decades, and birthrates have dropped. The mayor is worried that he may need to begin to close some schools.

### Zambian Church Will Only Marry HIV-Negative

A Christian church in Zambia has ruled that any couple intending to marry in the church must produce medical certificates proclaiming them HIV-negative. The senior pastor instituted the new rules after realizing that many newlyweds were dying of AIDS soon after getting married. He said he got the idea from a suggestion by a visiting clergy from Wales. Some human rights campaigners are concerned that the rules infringe on people's basic rights.

### Marriage Worth Big Money, Economists Say

Economists examining the lives of 100,000 people in Britain and America compared happiness in a lasting marriage with the amount produced by a change in financial circumstances. They found that a happy marriage is worth to people the same as having \$100,000 in the bank.

### Canada Coins New Term for Unmarrieds

As it prepares to extend rights to same-sex couples, Canada found it needed a word to define which relationships it was targeting in the new laws. The Department of Justice came up with the phrase "A person living in a relationship of some permanence with emotional, economic and sexual aspects" -- for short, *apliarospweeasa*. Pollsters tested the phrase on Canadians and found it ranked first; respondents preferred it to the phrases "a person living in a spousal relationship" and "a person living in a conjugal relationship."

### Chile Gives "Illegitimate" Kids Equal Rights

A new law in Chile will allow children with unmarried parents to receive the same rights, including entering the school of their choice, as children with married parents.

### German Businessman To Be Fined for Unmarried Sex

The judge in the case of German businessman Helmut Hofer, who had sex with an unmarried Iranian woman, has set a fine of 100 million rials -- the equivalent of \$33,300 -- in lieu of 99 lashes for Hofer. Other charges may still be pending against the businessman, who has been in jail for 20 months and was previously on death row.

### Indian Man with AIDS Seeks Right to Marry

Last year the Supreme Court of India barred any HIV-positive person from marrying. Now a man with AIDS is seeking to change that, alleging that the law denies him "the right to live with dignity, to marry and enjoy his social life." His fiancée is aware of his HIV status.

### Malaysia Hopes To Attract Wedding Business

In an effort to lure tourists, Malaysian authorities announced that an island resort will be turned into a haven for hassle-free, speedy marriages. The tiny island of Langkawi in northern Malaysia is known for its coral reefs, bottles of duty-free champagne, and five-star hotels dotting its beaches. Soon, couples wishing to marry there will be able to get a license within a day. The option is only available to non-Muslims.

### Canada Considers Expanding Coverage to More Couples

The justice minister of Canada is considering extending legal rights to economically dependent couples, including widowed sisters and brothers or even army buddies. Instead of defining rights by sexual relationships, she suggests the key issue should be dependency. A recent survey found that 71%

of Canadians either strongly or somewhat agreed that benefits should not depend on marriage, but on any relationship of economic dependency in which people live together.

### British Trains To Give Passes to Partners

Great Britain's train companies will now give free travel passes to both same-sex and different-sex partners of employees. In the past, the passes were available only to married and different-sex unmarried couples. In 1998 the European Court of Justice ruled against a lesbian who sued her employers, South West Trains, for the right to equal pay with unmarried heterosexuals, including a free travel pass for her partner.

### News From the United States

#### Unmarried Couples' Housing Rights Be Reconsidered

The nation's largest federal appeals court agreed to reconsider a ruling allowing landlords to refuse to rent to unmarried couples for religious reasons. A panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (whose decisions affect Alaska, California, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Montana, Arizona, Idaho, and Hawaii) ruled 2-1 last January that enforcement of local and state laws against housing discrimination based on marital status would violate the religious freedom of landlords. But the full court said yesterday that a majority of its 21 active judges had voted to set aside the January ruling and refer the case to an 11-judge panel for a new hearing. The January ruling had pointed out that marital status discrimination is not protected by the Constitution or by federal law.

#### Group Challenges Utah Adoption Restrictions

A child advocacy group called Utah Children is suing the state over a policy, adopted in January, that bars unmarried same-sex and different-sex couples from adopting children. As written, the law also prevents single people from adopting if they live with a roommate. Child protection groups, civil rights activists, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered activists predict the law cannot withstand a court challenge, since it is likely to lengthen the amount of time children must wait for permanent homes.

#### Bill Urges Marriage for Poor Fathers

The House of Representatives passed a bill that would, among other things, give \$161 million to nonprofit and religious groups to urge poor, unmarried fathers to marry their children's mothers and become better parents. Five million dollars of the total is earmarked for a national media campaign to promote marriage is the ideal way to raise children. The National Organization for Women has publicly opposed the bill because it promotes marriage as a goal without any exceptions for women who are victims of domestic violence. The bill has been endorsed by some

liberal-leaning groups, including the Children's Defense Fund and the Center for Policy and Budget Priorities.

#### Group Releases Report Attacking Unmarried Parents

The conservative Institute for American Values's new report "The Age of Unwed Mothers" by Maggie Gallagher has received considerable media attention. The report criticizes unmarried single women for not marrying in order to "legitimate" their children and strongly advocates marriage for all pregnant women, even though it says "the costs and benefits of early marriage versus unwed motherhood are relatively unstudied." The report recommends that legislatures not allow mothers under age 18 to bring their babies home from the hospital unless an adult commits to act as the baby's guardian.

#### Gore Urges Marriage

In a meeting with professional women, presidential candidate Al Gore outlined his plan to fight for working families. One of his pledges was to encourage marriage.

#### Lawsuit Dropped Against Church That Fired Cohabitor

The Fairplain Assembly of God church in Michigan no longer faces charges for firing a day care worker in 1992 because she lived with her fiancŽ. State civil rights officials have dropped their discrimination charges. Officials determined that the day care program was a ministry of the church, and that the church's prohibition on unmarried cohabitation is permitted under the First Amendment's protection of religion.

#### Domestic Partner News (U.S.)

##### California, City of Denver, Creates DP Registries

A new CA law officially recognizes same-sex couples and different-sex couples over age 62, and allows health insurance benefits to be extended to the unmarried partners of California government employees. Registered couples will gain the right to be considered "family" for purposes of hospital visitation. Denver, CO created a registry for same-sex and different-sex couples. The registry passed the City Council unanimously and had been endorsed by several gay and lesbian groups, the American Civil Liberties Union of Colorado, the Colorado National Organization for Women, Seniors Inc. and the Colorado Senior Lobby. It will not provide any immediate benefits for registered couples (city employees already receive health benefits for same-sex partners) but may be used by employers to determine eligibility for DP benefits.

## Madison, WI, Illinois Wesleyan University, Others Add DP Benefits

Employees of the city of Madison, Wisconsin will be eligible to be reimbursed for health insurance they purchase for same-sex or different-sex domestic partners. The reimbursement plan is a temporary one while the city researches adding domestic partners to the regular health insurance group. The same-sex and different-sex partners of employees at Illinois Wesleyan University will now be eligible for medical benefits, and definitions of family have been changed regarding family medical leave and sick leave. Other employers that recently added domestic partner benefits include Cox Communications of Atlanta, GA; Deloitte & Touche in New York; Doyle Hotels in Washington, D.C.; Prudential in Newark, N.J.; and U.S. Bancorp in Minneapolis, MN.

## Motorola, Boeing, CBS, Cal State, Vermont City To Offer Same-Sex Benefits

Motorola announced that it will extend health and dental benefits to the same-sex domestic partners of its employees. The announcement came after a year of negotiations between the company and its gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender employee group.

Boeing will provide health benefits to the same-sex domestic partners of its salaried non-union employees (about half of the company's employees are salaried and nonunion). In union negotiations, Boeing has refused to extend benefits to different-sex domestic partners in addition to same-sex partners. Because of this and other issues, the union is recommending that members reject Boeing's proposal when they vote.

CBS announced that it will also begin to offer benefits to the same-sex partners of its employees, leaving NBC as the only major TV network without a DP benefits program.

A panel of California State University trustees approved health benefits for same-sex partners of university employees and for different-sex partners age 62 or older. Employees of the city of Brattleboro, VT will now be eligible to receive health benefits. The University of Vermont already offers these benefits, and the city of Winooski is planning to do so. Burlington, VT has a sex-neutral DP benefits policy.

## State of Connecticut, Maryland County, Arizona City Consider DPs

CT state workers could receive domestic partner benefits for same and different-sex partners depending on the decision of an arbitrator who is considering the proposal. The state's governor opposes the benefits.

The Maryland Montgomery County Council is considering extending domestic partner benefits to the same-sex partners of county employees. An amendment is being circulated that would include different-sex partners, as well. An amendment is being considered that would broaden the bill to include different-sex partners, as well. The county's GOP Central Committee said it was concerned that the proposal sends a message validating an "alternative lifestyle." A labor union supports the bill.

Scottsdale, AZ could become the fourth city in that state (following Tucson, Pima County, and Tempe) to offer health benefits to city employees. The director of human resources in Scottsdale said the city was considering the proposal in order to remain competitive as an employer.

### Ashland, Oregon Cities Considers DP Registries

Ashland likely will become OR's first city to register same-sex couples as domestic partners. The city council is divided on the issue, but five members support the registry. Employees of Ashland, like all public employees of Oregon, are already eligible for DP benefits.

### California County Rejects DP Benefits

County supervisors in San Bernardino, CA decided not to offer domestic partner benefits to county employees despite emotional pleas from labor representatives and gay and lesbian activists. The supervisors cited concerns about costs as a reason to reject the benefits (despite the fact that on average, adding domestic partner benefits has been shown to increase costs between 0.5% and 3%. The county administrative officer also said he is not aware of any retention or recruitment problems as a result of not offering the benefits.

### Georgia Lifts Ban on DP Health Benefits

A judge ordered Georgia's insurance commissioner to lift his ban on health insurance coverage for domestic partners, and rebuked the commissioner for blocking Atlanta's domestic partner ordinance. The judge's ruling makes it possible for insurance companies to write policies that cover domestic partners in Georgia. Since 1995, the state commissioner had refused to approve any insurance policy providing for domestic partners, despite a 1997 Georgia Supreme Court ruling allowing Atlanta to offer benefits to the partners of city workers.

### Southwest, Delta Airlines, Ohio University Consider DP Benefits

In a recent communication, Southwest asked employees to be patient while it studies the possibility of adding domestic partner benefits. Currently only American and USAirways offer domestic partnership benefits. Southwest upset some employees when it expanded its benefits program but did not include domestic partner benefits.

A gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender employee group at Delta Airlines met with their senior vice president for human resources to discuss their 14-month old proposal for domestic partner benefits.

Ohio University's gay, lesbian, and bisexual employee group is lobbying the university to institute DP benefits. Currently, Ohio State University is the only one of the state's public colleges to offer DP benefits. A subcommittee to consider the issue was first formed over a year ago.

### Fleet Financial Group To Offer Broad Family Benefits

Fleet Financial Group, which is seeking to merge with BankBoston, has announced that it will offer the type of extended family benefits

previously offered by BankBoston to all its employees. The plan allows employees to receive health insurance for a same or different-sex domestic partner or for a parent or other dependent relative who meets certain criteria. The executive vice president and director of human resources wrote, "We are very pleased to offer benefits that feature the best of both organizations and reflect our philosophy of recognizing diversity in the workplace."

### Seattle Requires Large Contractors To Offer DPs

Seattle became the second city in the country (following San Francisco's lead) to require large businesses that do business with the city to offer the same benefits to employees' same-sex and different-sex domestic partners as they offer to married employees' spouses. Since San Francisco's law went into effect two years ago, it has resulted in over 2,000 businesses adding domestic partner benefits, including some on a nationwide scale. Seattle's law will only affect businesses with contracts over \$33,000.

### U.S. Embassy Considers Rights for Partners

An LGBT employees' group and the State Department's labor union are pushing for full diplomatic benefits for unmarried live-in partners of U.S. Embassy officers in foreign countries. The department recently refused to allow the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to grant preferential visa assistance and other diplomatic benefits to a Polish national who is the same-sex partner of a U.S. Embassy officer in Russia. Currently, diplomatic immunity is available to "members of the diplomat's family forming part of the household" but unmarried couples are excluded from the definition of "family."

### Northwest, GM Expand Definitions

Northwest Airlines recently decreased the cost of travel passes for the same-sex domestic partners of its employees, so that they are now in line with the cost of spousal passes.

General Motors has announced it will allow its employees to bring unmarried same-sex or different-sex partners, as well as anyone an employee wants, to corporate events and business functions. This change, as well as others, were pushed by 500 employees working over the last year in eight employee resource groups. The groups included gays and lesbians, women, Asian-Americans, Hispanics, people with disabilities, non-U.S. citizens working in the United States, African-Americans, and white men.

### Pat Robertson's Group Loses Attack on NY DPs

A New York appeals court has upheld New York City's domestic partner law. The attempt to overturn the law was part of a national campaign waged by Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice to overturn municipal domestic partner ordinances across the country. The court found no reason to prevent the city from offering DP benefits to its employees and retirees.

### Pennsylvania Allows Colleges To Refuse DPs

The PA legislature passed a bill that would allow state-financed colleges to refuse to offer same-sex domestic partner benefits even if a municipality requires the coverage. The governor is expected to sign the legislation, making PA the only state with such a law. The legislation arose after the University of Pittsburgh refused to provide health insurance to the partner of a lesbian employee, even though the city of Pittsburgh forbids discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. She has sued the university.

### University of New Hampshire, Virginia County Lose DPs

The University of New Hampshire has reversed a controversial vote it took in June to extend health benefits to employees' same-sex partners. Although the trustees' personnel committee passed the measure, the financial committee voted it down, saying the university could not afford to add the benefits, estimated to cost \$25,000. An Arlington, Virginia judge ruled that the county's policy of providing health insurance benefits to its the same-sex and different-sex domestic partners of employees is prohibited under state law. Unlike some other states, Virginia is governed by the so-called Dillon Rule, which says that local governments "have only those powers that are expressly granted . . . or implied" by the state legislature. The judge found that Virginia law does not give local governments the authority to define "dependent" as including both married and unmarried partners, but said he hopes the decision will be appealed so the state's Supreme Court can consider it.

### Cardinal Speaks Against DPs

At a meeting of representatives of the European bishops' conferences, Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi of Genoa has spoken out against the drive to give "false equality" under the law to common-law marriages and domestic partnerships. Such moves, he said, would work "to the detriment of the institutions of society." He called for efforts to draw "the clearest possible line of demarcation between the families that are based on marriage and those that are not."

### More Media Companies Offering DP Benefits

According to the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, the number of news companies and associated unions offering domestic partner benefits has more than doubled since 1997. In 1994 there were 10 media companies offering DP benefits; today there are at least 57. Over 650 newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, magazines, and online news sites offer the benefits.

### Massachusetts DP Bill Passes Senate

A bill that would provide health benefits for same-sex and different-sex partners of state employees has passed the state Senate. The bill would also allow similar laws to be passed at the municipal level without first needing legislative approval. Activists expect the bill to have more difficulty passing in the House. Even if it does pass, the governor last year vetoed a similar bill because he opposes rights for unmarried different-sex partners, and he could do the same thing again.

#### Wisconsin Could Prohibit Discussion of DPs in Union Bargaining

A bill introduced in the WI Assembly could prohibit discussion of health or insurance benefits for employees' unmarried partners in collective bargaining. The executive director of the Wisconsin State Employees Union said the union would oppose the bill.