

## September 1999

Alternatives to  
Marriage Update:

September 1999

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Out and About

### ATMP To Appear on New Talk Show

The new television talk show *The Full Nelson* will explore the question "Is Marriage Obsolete?" this weekend, and ATMP co-founder Marshall Miller will appear as one of the guests. Marshall will explain that the Alternatives to Marriage Project believes the role of marriage has changed, and that society needs to support all people's relationships. Although we're told the schedule could change because of the holiday weekend (check your local listings to be sure), *The Full Nelson* is expected to air Saturday, Sept. 4th and Sunday, Sept. 5th at 11 p.m. EST on the Fox News Channel.

### Our Op-Ed Published in Arizona Daily Star

In response to a ridiculous marriage-is-the-only-answer column that appeared in the Arizona Daily Star, we wrote an op-ed of our own, with the headline "Unmarried Bliss Can Be Just as Rewarding, Research Shows." We pointed out that the writer of the original column, a Heritage Foundation intern, didn't have a solid understanding of the social science research related to marital status. You can read our op-ed online.

### Florida Paper Quotes Us

An article in the Gainesville Sun on marriage trends quoted co-founder Dorian Solot several times. Solot questioned the notion that the institution of marriage is dying, but said people need other options as marriage is no longer the necessity it once was.

#### Letter Runs in New England Gay & Lesbian Paper

Our letter to the editor appeared in Bay Windows, a New England gay/lesbian/bisexual newspaper. We wrote in response to an article about domestic partner benefits in which benefits for different-sex couples were portrayed as nothing more than a legal nuisance. We pointed out that DP benefits recognize the diversity of ways people choose to structure their families. We also pointed out that requiring providing DPs for some couples while requiring others to marry -- based solely on the sexes of the individuals in the couple -- is illogical.

#### Volunteers Needed

We are seeking people who can help us in the following ways:

##### Spanish Translator

We occasionally receive emails in Spanish. We'd love to find someone with good English/Spanish translation skills who would translate the messages for us and translate our reply back into Spanish. The ideal volunteer would be able to complete the message turnaround within a few days, either by fax or email.

##### Marketing/Graphic Design Consulting

We would love to find a graphic design or marketing consultant who could provide short-term pro bono services to help us improve our image and materials.

If you might be able to help us, please contact us!

#### Sniffing Out the Unmarrieds

We want to know about high-profile people in unmarried relationships! This includes not only celebrities but also writers, musicians, business people, activists, artists, and others.

If you hear about someone who may be one of us, please drop us a line!

## Book Buzz

New Families, New Finances: Money Skills for Today's Nontraditional Families,

by Emily Card and Christie Watts Kelly (1998).

This mission of this financial guide is to make nontraditional families its norm, rather than forcing the majority of people who read it to wonder how to change make "traditional" advice fit their less traditional lives. Most of its advice related to "money skills" is similar to what you'd find in an equivalent book for "traditional" readers, except that in each section there are a few lines of special strategies for two-earner families, single parent families, blended families, cohabiting different-sex couples, cohabiting same-sex couples, adoptive families, foster families, wife as breadwinner families, multicultural families, older parents, families with adult children living at home, grandparents raising grandchildren, and couples with significant age differences. The authors also go out of their way to acknowledge realities that other books may gloss over. In addition to advice about taxes, investing, and handling financial emergencies, they offer suggestions about how to maintain your own sanity in stressful times and how to impart healthy financial values to children.

Since the needs of each of these kinds of nontraditional families differ dramatically, the book doesn't go into great depth about any one of them. Unmarried couples seeking in-depth insights would do better with a financial guide specifically for unmarried couples. However, *New Families, New Finances* is a solid, easy-to-read book about money management, and may be especially helpful to people who fall into more than one of the non-traditional categories it covers.

## Upcoming Workshops

Upcoming: October 8, Feminism and Rhetoric Conference (Minneapolis, MN)

Alternatives to Marriage: Exploring the Rhetoric of Non-Traditional Relationships Along with Kirsten Isgro, Marshall Miller and Dorian Solot will present a roundtable session about the challenges of finding language to describe unmarried relationships, especially to name or describe one's partner to others. For more information about the conference, visit their website, or call (612) 626-7583.

## The Future

It's always wonderful to continue the conversation about the issues facing unmarried people with different groups around the country. We would love to speak in your city, at your college, or at an upcoming conference you know about! E-mail or call us to discuss the possibilities.

## Sizzling Statistics

### More Divorces for Marriages Between Denominations

A study by the Creighton University Center for Marriage and Family found that married couples from different Christian denominations divorce at a higher rate than those who wed within the same denomination. The percentage of divorces among interchurch couples was 20%, compared to 14% among same-church couples.

Teen Brides On the Rise In the United States, about 11 percent of the brides are younger than 20 years old. In Utah, the statistic is 22 percent.

### Not All Married Taxpayers Are Penalized

48% of American joint tax filers, or 24.8 million married couples, will pay a "marriage penalty" this year. 41%, or 21 million married couples, will pay less than if they filed as singles, giving them a "marriage bonus." The remainder will pay the same tax bill as they would if they were unmarried.

### More Unmarried Moms Living With Male Partners

According to a researcher at Penn State University, an increasing percentage of never-married mothers live with a male partner. Before the 1980s, 9.3% of unmarried women giving birth to their first child lived with a male partner at the time of the birth. During the 1980s, this figure rose to 17.2%. Today, about 1/3 of unmarried women who give birth live with a partner.

### Adult Children of Divorced Parents Less Likely To Divorce

A new study shows that adults raised by divorced mothers are far less likely to get divorced themselves than they were 20 years ago. According to University of Utah sociologist Nicholas Wolfinger, the gap is closing because parents increasingly divorce before their relationship becomes severely conflicted, reducing the negative effects for children.

In 1973, children of divorced parents were 172% more likely to divorce themselves. In 1994 they were only 49% more likely.

In the mid-'70s, children of divorced parents had a 36% higher marriage

rate than children whose parents did not divorce.

In 1994 children of divorced parents had a 5% lower marriage rate.

### Australian Couples Face Greatest Divorce Risk Early in Marriage

The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that married couples are more likely to split up in their second or third years of marriage than at any other time. Of the 51,370 couples who divorced in 1998, almost one in four had spent their third wedding anniversary living apart. The bureau reports that half the marriages that will end in divorce tend to break down before their eighth anniversary. After thirty years together, only 3% of couples divorce. Overall, about 40% of Australian marriages end in divorce, and rates have been rising over the last decade.

### Growing Numbers of Married Couples Living Apart

The United States Census Bureau category "married, spouse absent" increased by 790,000 people since 1994, to 7 million in 1998. The category covers any married couple who live apart. While some of these couples are having marital problems or considering divorce, others are apart because of the geography of their careers, because one spouse is in long-term care, or because they simply find their relationship works well if they don't live together. It is interesting to consider that couples who are married and live apart still get the legal benefits of marriage, but domestic partners are nearly always required to live together to receive benefits.

### News From Around the World

#### Man Proposes in Television Ad

For about \$900, an Icelandic man who works in advertising proposed marriage to his girlfriend in a commercial on prime-time television. His girlfriend was at home watching when she saw the commercial. She said yes.

#### Canadian Rent-A-Priests Helping People Marry

A new rent-a-priest service is recruiting married Catholic priests lost their right to function in the Catholic church when they married. These priests, who number in the thousands, are helping to fill the gap left by a shortage of celibate clerics. The Rentapriest referral service now has branches in 28 countries. The married priests are able to marry people who would be unable to marry in their own parishes because they are divorced and have not obtained an annulment of their marriage, or because they want to celebrate their marriage outdoors or in another location the church does not permit. Rentapriest marriages are legal but are not recognized by the Catholic church.

#### Pakistan Fails To Condemn Honor Killings

Pakistan's upper house, the Senate, has rejected a resolution condemning the growing incidence of murder of women in the name of family honor. Recently, it became a major issue when a woman who had fled her home to avoid a forced marriage was shot down by a hired killer in the office of a human rights activist. The incident sparked a bitter debate in the country, with human rights groups asking for a strict new law to discourage the practice. Members from the highly conservative tribal region of the north-west frontier province prevented the resolution from passing.

#### Iranian Trial Delayed For German Accused of Unmarried Sex

The trial of a German businessman accused of having sex with an unmarried Iranian woman has been temporarily postponed. The man was initially sentenced to death in January 1998 for having sex with a 26-year-old Iranian medical student. Under Iranian law, sex outside marriage is punishable by flogging, but if the man is not Muslim, he faces the death penalty. Iran's Justice Ministry ordered a retrial after the man insisted he had converted to Islam before he had sex with the woman. He was convicted a second time and again sentenced to death, but the Supreme Court annulled the death sentence and ordered a second retrial. The man is being held in prison because officials fear he would otherwise flee the country.

#### Kenyan Church Will Not Marry HIV-Positive

The Provost of the Homa Bay Cathedral of the Anglican Church in Kenya announced that his church would not perform marriages unless the engaged couples have medical proof of being HIV-negative. The head of the Anglican Church of Kenya criticized the cleric for making a policy statement which could only be higher decision-makers in the church. He said the church simply encouraged couples to find out their HIV status before getting married.

#### Britain Considers Equal Treatment for Same-Sex Partners

The British government is considering recognizing same-sex couples under a new criminal compensation law. The possible change was spurred by the April bombing of a gay pub in London. A gay man whose partner was killed in the blast was denied compensation because the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority does not recognize same-sex couples. If the couple had been an unmarried male-female couple, the man would have been entitled to up to \$160,000 in government benefits. The consideration of this law has led some to call for same-sex couples to be treated equally to unmarried different-sex couples in matters of parental workplace time-off laws, determining next-of-kin, and pensions, wills, tax, housing and adoption.

#### Students Call for Recognition of Diverse Relationships

A Priscilla Queen of the North tour, organized by Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgendered of the University of Toronto, is traveling Ontario. The group is celebrating the right for all Canadians to choose the relationships that are right for them, and calling for the federal government to legally recognize a diverse range of relationships including same-sex unions and multi-partner relationships. The group also held a lesbian wedding procession on Parliament Hill.

## British Asians Forced into Arranged Marriages

A UK child abduction charity estimates that there are about 1,000 forced marriages in Britain per year, a figure believed to be an underestimate by a UK black and Asian women's support group. An independent inquiry has recently been created to investigate the extent of the problem and seek preventative measures. The British government has often been reluctant to interfere with the marriages because British-born women of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin are considered to have dual nationality.

## Seminar Explores Marital Rape in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Penal Code -- like American laws until a few decades ago -- defines rape as something that can only happen "outside wedlock," meaning that it is legal for men to force their wives to have sex. The subject was discussed in a one-day seminar organized by the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. Those who favor the current penal code say that when a woman gets married, she gives her unconditional consent to have sex with her husband, and that laws making forced sex illegal would interfere with a couple's "peaceful life." Most of those attending the seminar urged the government to change the penal code to outlaw marital rape.

## Malaysian State Seeks to Help Unattractive Women Marry

In the Kelantan state in the northeast corner of Malaysia, the state's chief minister recently announced a policy not to hire attractive women for government jobs, saying they are more likely to land rich husbands. "It's to make things more balanced," he said. "We hire the less pretty, unmarried women. Once they're on the job, maybe they can find a husband. Most unmarried women are not pretty, don't you agree?" he said.

## Indian Court Finds Sex Refusal Not Sufficient to Nullify Marriage

In a judgment by the Karnataka High Court in India has said that "non-consummation" of marriage cannot be made the basis for nullifying it. The court upheld the law that the "impotence" of either spouse was grounds for nullifying a marriage, but that one person's refusal to have sex was not enough to call for nullification.

## Black South African Marriages Never Recorded

The marriages of millions of black South Africans may not be recognized by the state and their children could be regarded as having been born out of wedlock. South Africa's Department of Home Affairs recently admitted that marriages of black couples and births of black children before 1990 were never entered in the central database computer. The situation, which has severe implications for insurance claims and inheritances from joint estates, can be rectified only by applying to the department for new marriage certificates, birth certificates, and ID documents.

## Ministry Says Wives Should Submit to Husbands

At a recent staff conference, the Campus Crusade for Christ, one of the world's largest interdenominational ministries, joined the Southern Baptist Convention in declaring that "a wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband." Both groups say the wife is spiritually equal but "has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation." The ministry, based in Florida, operates 50 evangelistic ministries with 20,500 staff members and 663,000 volunteers worldwide.

#### Malaysian Woman Dies as Police Seek Unwed Couple

A woman fleeing Islamic police fell five stories to her death when she tried to escape the apartment of a male friend through his back window. Religious police raided the apartment after being tipped off that an unwed couple was alone inside. Under Islamic law, unmarried couples can be charged with "close proximity" if caught in a room alone together. Police raids are common and offenders, tried in Islamic courts, can face up to two months in jail and a fine if convicted. It is believed the woman tried to hide from police on a balcony but slipped and fell.

#### Ugandan Female Police Officers Must Have Husbands Approved

Female police officers in Uganda who wish to marry must seek permission from the Inspector General of Police. Male officers are not required to seek similar approval. According to the Inspector General, the district police commander is required to investigate the prospective partner of a female officer and can decide not to approve of him.

#### Marriage Less Affordable for Egyptian Men

Egyptian grooms are traditionally expected to provide their bride with an apartment, an engagement gift and the wedding ceremony. Brides' families often insist the men's financial demands be met before the wedding as security for their daughters. The costs of these items -- often \$20,000 to \$120,000 -- is putting marriage financially out of reach for a growing percentage of men. Today's requirements contrast sharply with demands three decades ago, when a dowry of \$70 and a rented apartment were enough to secure permission to marry. In 1996, only 66% of Egyptian men were married. Some social activists say that men's frustration with their inability to afford marriage has driven them to commit rape or suicide.

#### United Nations Group Seeks Same-Sex DP Benefits

The United Nations' 100-member lesbian, gay, and bisexual employee advocacy group has issued a statement calling for full spousal benefits for their partners. The U.N. prohibits sexual orientation-based discrimination in its employment practices, but it does not recognize its workers' same-sex partners for benefits such as insurance, pensions, relocation, travel, or assistance obtaining visas. The visas are viewed as particularly crucial, since UN employees are expected to be mobile and could easily be sent to a country where their partners couldn't follow.

#### Activists Call for Crackdown on Sham Marriages in Egypt

A study found that out of every 200 marriages between Egyptian women

and foreigners, only one lasts more than a few months. Marriage contracts are often struck between poor families and wealthy Arabs from the oil-rich Persian Gulf who flock to Egypt on vacation. Many of the visitors want temporary companionship and are willing to offer dowries of up to \$9,000, often abandoning women pregnant. In 1998, there were roughly 1,500 marriages between Egyptians and foreigners. Some activists say that the government could crack down on the marriages by enforcing laws that already exist, like a law that makes it illegal for a foreign man to marry an Egyptian woman if the age difference is more than 25 years. Children whose fathers are foreigners do not receive Egyptian citizenship, making them ineligible for the country's education and health care systems.

#### Japanese Debate Implications of Importing Foreign Wives

Of the 28,000 marriages between Japanese and foreigners in 1997, 21,000 involved Japanese men and foreign women. The number of such international marriages began rising sharply ten years ago when rural villages in Tohoku got involved in arranging unions for single male farmers because of a shortage of available women in those areas. Marriages with women from other parts of Asia, such as the Phillipines, South Korea, and China, account for 90 percent of all such marriages. Although advocates say these marriages help prevent young people from leaving their villages, the foreign women often struggle, since they don't speak Japanese and do not receive the same rights and status as their husbands.

#### Pope Urges Renewed Focus on Marriage, Family

Speaking to a group of scholars, Pope John Paul II said that the Church faces an "urgent" task of upholding marriage and family life in the face of a "secularized mentality" which fails to recognize the "essential meaning of human sexuality." He lamented that childbearing is seen as a "private project," which can be accomplished by biological efforts, including biomedical techniques, completely separate from sex within marriage. He warned that this results in an insult to "the unique personal dignity of the child."

#### News From the United States

##### Unmarrieds in Wisconsin Accuse State of Discrimination

Wisconsin Secretary of State and other state employees are suing Wisconsin over a state law that allows only spouses or dependents of state workers to receive a worker's full retirement benefits if that employee dies before retirement. If the designated beneficiary of the benefits is not a spouse or dependent, the beneficiary receives only the employee's contribution, not the employer's portion of what's in the retirement account. The plaintiffs' attorney says the law conflicts with another state law that prohibits employers from discriminating against employees on the basis of their marital status or gender. Because there are more female state employees without spouses or dependents than male employees, the suit alleges the law discriminates against women.

##### Woman May Be Deported For Role in False Marriage

The Immigration and Naturalization Service is planning to deport a woman who was brought to the United States from the Philippines by an American couple seeking household help. To arrange for her admission to the U.S., the couple divorced and the husband married the Filipino woman. When the sham marriage was discovered, the American couple remarried. Only the Filipino woman is facing a penalty: deportation. Some are calling for the deportation order to be withdrawn.

### Washington State Pastors Try To Help Marrying Couples

Pastors from more than 60 Christian churches signed a pact recently, during the height of the wedding season, that aims to help engaged couples start their marriages on a solid foundation. The Greater Eastside Community Marriage Agreement is the latest of 14 such pacts signed across Washington state since fall 1997, and it is expected to have the most signers. Participating churches in seven cities will commit to work toward building "strong and joyful marriages" by offering premarital counseling, post-wedding mentoring and other training. The goal is to reduce the divorce rate.

### Couple Sells Ads to Pay for Wedding

A Philadelphia couple paid for their \$34,000 wedding by selling advertising space at the ceremony and reception. Everything from the wedding rings to a week at a penthouse in Cancun, Mexico, were donated after the groom got 24 companies to sponsor the nuptials in exchange for having their names appear six times from the invitations to the thank-you cards.

### Oregon Couples May Divorce To Keep Benefits

About 210 Oregon couples receive \$900 a month through a spousal pay program that allows so the spouse of a disabled person to care for him or her instead of hiring a caregiver. However, when the legislature recently cut the program, most of the couples will have to have a paid caregiver move in with them, move the disabled person to a nursing home, or divorce in order to be eligible to be "hired" as a caregiver. In many states, couples with a disabled partner already choose not to marry because marriage would make the disabled person ineligible for necessary medical and financial benefits.

### Immigration Accuses Travel Agencies of Arranging Fake Marriages

Federal authorities charged that two New Jersey travel agencies served as conduits to arrange hundreds of sham marriages for immigrants attempting to evade immigration laws. If a U.S. citizen is married to a non-citizen, the citizen can petition the Immigration and Naturalization Service to make their spouse a "lawful permanent resident," which allows the foreigner to work and could lead to permanent residency and citizenship. One of the travel agencies charged \$4,500 to \$5,500 for marriages during 1997 and 1998, the INS alleged. The two agencies were said to be responsible for at least 100 marriages each. Although the foreigners could face deportation, no charges have been brought against the citizens who married them.

### Two Women "Accidentally" Married in Arizona

Although same-sex marriage is not legal anywhere in the United States, a woman dressed as a man married another woman in Tombstone, AZ. The minister who performed the marriage said she did not suspect that the groom was female. Fraud charges are being considered because she signed a space indicating that she was a male on the marriage certificate. She could also be charged with bigamy because court records indicate she's not divorced from the man she married a year ago. In addition, she was about to start serving at least five years in prison for robbing and kidnapping an elderly couple.

#### Television Wedding Show a Success

"A Wedding Story," a show that follows couples through their pre-wedding preparations and then shows the final event, has become one of the most popular shows on the cable Learning Channel. The show airs several times daily and is one of the most watched daytime cable shows, drawing its largest audiences among women ages 25 to 54. Although the show does not keep track of whether the featured couples stay married, one producer said she thinks their couples are above-average. "If it's superficial love, then it will only take you so far in a 30-minute show," she said.

#### North Carolina Victims No Longer Penalized for Cohabitation

North Carolina's state crime compensation fund has agreed to give money to victims who had broken minor laws such as living with an unmarried partner. The commission will pay the medical costs and funeral expenses of the families of fourteen murder victims whose claims were rejected because the victims had broken the state's rarely-enforced law against unmarried cohabitation. Although the law previously required the commission to reject claims for victims who were involved in felonies or misdemeanors, the new law allows the commission more discretion. The anti-cohabitation law remains on the books.

#### New York Prisoners Unable to Marry

The Attica, New York town clerk says she won't enter the Wyoming Correctional Facility, a medium-security prison, to witness inmates signing marriage licenses. Although prisoners technically have the right to marry, all licenses must be notarized by a clerk who lives in the town, and the clerks' unwillingness to enter the prison means that prisoners are now unable to get married. The town clerk could deputize a prison employee to perform the duty, but so far no employees have volunteered. One prisoner, who had planned to marry his fiancée this year, said he was "extremely heartbroken."

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

#### Airlines Offer Same-Sex DP Benefits, Broaden Definitions

United Airlines became the first U.S. airline to offer domestic-partner benefits to employees and retirees worldwide. The airline will offer full

benefits, including health and pension coverage, to same-sex couples. Unmarried different-sex couples will get only non-economic benefits such as bereavement leave. The benefits are being offered even though the airline continues in its two-year legal battle against the city of San Francisco, which requires businesses to offer domestic partner benefits.

One week after United's decision, American Airlines said it also plans to extend full dependent benefits, including medical and dental insurance, life insurance and travel privileges. to the same-sex partners of employees.

One day after American's announcement, US Airlines announced it, too, will offer domestic partner benefits. Details of its plan have not been released.

Kerry Lobel, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said the benefits were a good first step but did not go far enough since they exclude different-sex couples: "It's a bittersweet victory when gay and lesbian couples get their benefits but others are excluded."

Alaska Airlines has announced it will extend its "Designated Guest Pass" travel benefits to any individual selected by an employee, regardless of gender or relationship.

#### Gainesville, Florida City Employees To Receive DP Benefits

The same-sex and different-sex domestic partners of Gainesville city employees will receive health benefits next year after a vote by the city commission.

#### Texas County Considers DP Registry

Bexar County officials have asked the state attorney general's office for an opinion on whether the county should do what only one other county in Texas is doing: registering domestic partners. Such an arrangement would allow same-sex and different-sex unmarried couples to document their status for employers that offer domestic partner workplace benefits. Travis County, Texas established its domestic partner registry in 1993.

#### Madison, Wisconsin To Consider DP Reimbursement

A proposal to extend health insurance to the same-sex and different-sex partners of Madison city employees is expected to face a vote in the city council sometime this fall, city officials say. If the proposal passes, Madison would be the first municipality in Wisconsin to pay health insurance for domestic partners of city employees. The plan would reimburse domestic partners for what would have been covered if they were recognized as a family by the state's Group Insurance Board, which provides Madison city employee insurance. The city already has a domestic partner registry with 148 couples registered. The Madison Metropolitan School District already offers domestic partner benefits, which are currently facing a legal challenge.

#### DPs Are Effective Hiring Incentive

A survey of 279 human resources professionals in 19 industries found that domestic partner benefits are a highly effective incentive in

recruiting new hires -- the top-ranked incentive for executives and the third-ranked for managers and line workers. Domestic partner benefits were said to be more effective than telecommuting options, hiring bonuses, stock options, and 401(k) plans.

### Group Threatens To Sue Towns That Offer DP Benefits

A nonprofit law firm founded by televangelist Pat Robertson threatened to sue two Massachusetts towns, Cambridge and Northampton, unless they comply with a July court ruling that barred the city of Boston from offering health benefits to the partners of city workers. The court ruling found that until the rules regarding eligibility were changed legislatively, the city could not choose to offer domestic partner benefits. It is not clear whether the ruling applies to other towns in the state.

### University of Pittsburgh Still Refuses DPs

While students and faculty members protested the University of Pittsburgh's refusal to provide health benefits to the same-sex partners of its employees, the university said offering the benefits would cost too much. The university is facing a discrimination complaint filed under the city's law prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination. On average, employers who provide domestic partner benefits find their costs increase only about 1%.

### Milwaukee DP Registry Opens

On its first day, 20 same-sex couples registered as domestic partners in Milwaukee's newly-implemented registry. Since registering does not confer any immediate benefits, registration is mostly symbolic. Some employers may voluntarily recognize the registrations for the purpose of offering benefits.

### California DP Bills Struggle with Definitions

Two bills currently being considered would, if passed, give California the first statewide domestic partner registry. One bill, passed by the state Assembly, is gender-neutral and would give some rights to any registered unmarried couple. The other bill, said to be favored by the governor, would allow only same-sex couples and different-sex couples who are ages 62 and over to register. According to senior advocates, many elderly couples live together but don't marry because they don't want to lose pension benefits or reduce their Social Security payments. American Association of Single People Executive Director Thomas Coleman said the proposed policies don't go far enough.